THEMES IN
INDIAN HISTORY
PART II

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Textbook in History
for Class XII

THEMES IN
INDIAN HISTORY

PART II

12094

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NCERT

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

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FOREWORD

The *National Curriculum Framework* (NCF), 2005, recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of bookish learning which continues to shape our system and causes a gap between the school, home and community. The syllabi and textbooks developed on the basis of NCF signify an attempt to implement this basic idea. They also attempt to discourage rote learning and the maintenance of sharp boundaries between different subject areas. We hope these measures will take us significantly further in the direction of a child-centred system of education outlined in the *National Policy on Education* (1986).

The success of this effort depends on the steps that school principals and teachers will take to encourage children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. We must recognise that, given space, time and freedom, children generate new knowledge by engaging with the information passed on to them by adults. Treating the prescribed textbook as the sole basis of examination is one of the key reasons why other resources and sites of learning are ignored. Inculcating creativity and initiative is possible if we perceive and treat children as participants in learning, not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge.

These aims imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the required number of teaching days are actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective this textbook proves for making children's life at school a happy experience, rather than a source of stress or boredom. Syllabus designers have tried to address the problem of curricular burden by restructuring and reorienting knowledge at different stages with greater consideration for child psychology and the time available for teaching. The textbook attempts to enhance this endeavour by giving higher priority and space to opportunities for contemplation and wondering, discussion in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) appreciates the hard work done by the textbook development committee responsible for this book. We wish to thank the Chairperson of the advisory group in Social Sciences, Professor Hari Vasudevan, and the Chief Advisor for this book, Professor Neeladri Bhattacharya, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi for guiding the work of this committee. Several teachers contributed to the development of this textbook; we are grateful to their principals for making this possible. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, material and personnel. We are especially grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairpersonship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G.P. Deshpande, for their valuable time and contribution. As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinement.

Director
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New Delhi
20 November 2006

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RATIONALISATION OF CONTENT IN THE TEXTBOOKS

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative to reduce content load on students. The National Education Policy 2020, also emphasises reducing the content load and providing opportunities for experiential learning with creative mindset. In this background, the NCERT has undertaken the exercise to rationalise the textbooks across all classes. Learning Outcomes already developed by the NCERT across classes have been taken into consideration in this exercise.

Contents of the textbooks have been rationalised in view of the following:

- Overlapping with similar content included in other subject areas in the same class
- Similar content included in the lower or higher class in the same subject
- Difficulty level
- Content, which is easily accessible to students without much interventions from teachers and can be learned by children through self-learning or peer-learning
- Content, which is irrelevant in the present context

This present edition, is a reformatted version after carrying out the changes given above.

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DEFINING THE FOCUS OF STUDY

What defines the focus of this book? What does it seek to do? How is it linked to what has been studied in earlier classes?

In Classes VI to VIII we looked at Indian history from early beginnings to modern times, with a focus on one chronological period in each year. Then in the books for Classes IX and X, the frame of reference changed. We looked at a shorter period of time, focusing specifically on a close study of the contemporary world. We moved beyond territorial boundaries, beyond the limits of nation states, to see how different people in different places have played their part in the making of the modern world. The history of India became connected to a wider inter-linked history. Subsequently in Class XI we studied *Themes in World History*, expanding our chronological focus, looking at the vast span of years from the beginning of human life to the present, but selecting only a set of themes for serious exploration. This year we will study *Themes in Indian History*.

The book begins with Harappa and ends with the framing of the Indian Constitution. What it offers is not a general survey of five millennia, but a close study of select themes. The history books in earlier years have already acquainted you with Indian history. It is time we explored some themes in greater detail.

In choosing the themes we have tried to ensure that we learn about developments in different spheres – economic, cultural, social, political, and religious – even as we attempt to break the boundaries between them. Some themes in the book will introduce you to the politics of the times and the nature of authority and power; others explore the way societies are organised, and the way they function and change; still others tell us about religious life and ritual practices, about the working of economies, and the changes within rural and urban societies.

Each of these themes will also allow you to have a closer look at the historians' craft. To retrieve the past, historians have to find sources that make the past accessible. But sources do not just reveal the past; historians have to grapple with sources, interpret them, and make them speak. This is what makes history exciting. The same sources can tell us new things if we ask new questions, and engage with them in new ways. So we need to see how historians read sources, and how they discover new things in old sources.

But historians do not only re-examine old records. They discover new ones. Sometimes these could be chance discoveries. Archaeologists may unexpectedly come across seals and mounds that provide clues to the existence of a site of an ancient civilisation. Rummaging through the dusty records of a district collectorate a historian may trip over a bundle of records that contain legal cases of local disputes, and these may open up a new world of village life several centuries back. Yet are such discoveries only accidents? You may bump into a bundle of old records in an archive, open it up and see it, without discovering the significance of the source. The source may mean nothing to you unless you have relevant questions in mind. You have to track the source, read the text, follow the clues, and make the inter-connections before you can reconstruct the past. The physical discovery of a record does not simply open up the past. When Alexander Cunningham first saw a Harappan seal, he could make no sense of it. Only much later was the significance of the seals discovered.

In fact when historians begin to ask new questions, explore new themes, they have to often search for new types of sources. If we wish to know about revolutionaries and rebels, official sources can reveal only a partial picture, one that will be shaped by official censure and prejudice. We need to look for other sources – diaries of rebels, their personal letters, their writings and pronouncements. And these are not always easy to come by. If we have to understand experiences of people, then oral sources might reveal more than written sources.

As the vision of history broadens, historians begin tracking new sources, searching for new clues to understand the past. And when that happens, the conception of what constitutes a source itself changes. There was a time when only written records were acknowledged as authentic. What was written could be verified, cited, and cross-checked. Oral evidence was never considered a valid source: who was to guarantee its authenticity and verifiability? This mistrust of oral sources has not yet disappeared, but oral evidence has been innovatively used to uncover experiences that no other record could reveal.

Through the book this year, you will enter the world of historians, accompany them in their search for new clues, and see how they carry on their dialogues with the past. You will witness the way they tease out meaning out of records, read inscriptions, excavate archaeological sites, make sense of beads and bones, interpret the epics, look at the stupas and buildings, examine paintings and photographs, interpret police reports and revenue records, and listen to the voices of the past. Each theme will explore the peculiarities and possibilities of one particular type of source. It will discuss what a source can tell and what it cannot.

This is Part II, of *Themes in Indian History.* Part III will follow.

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Finally, we look forward to feedback from the users of the book, which will help us improve it in subsequent editions.

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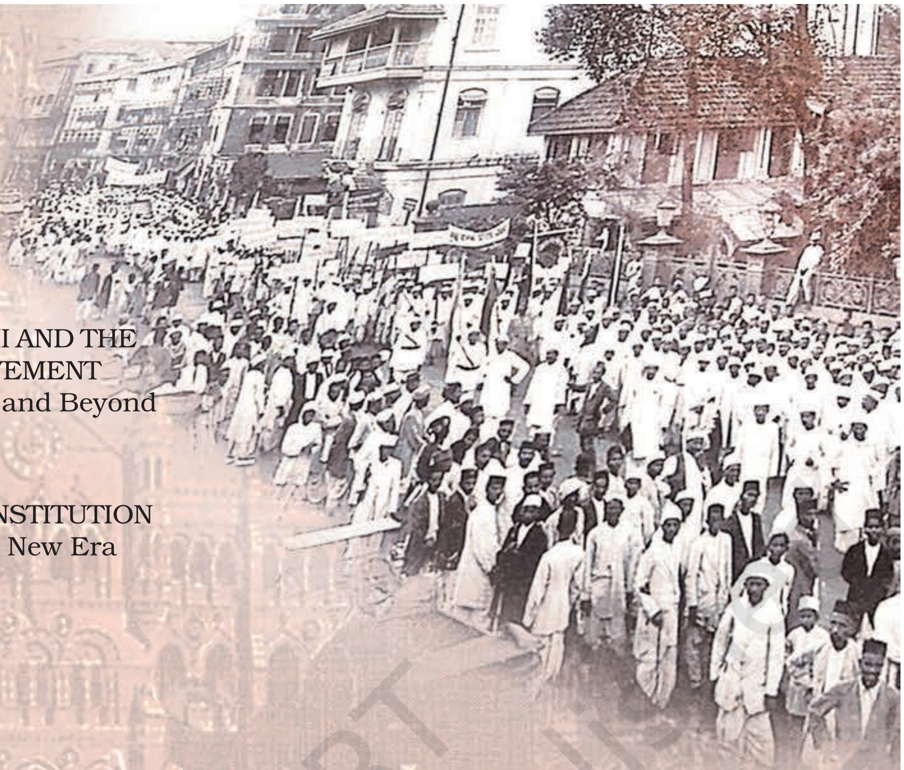

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This is Part II of *Themes in Indian History*. Part III will follow.

☑ Each chapter is divided into numbered sections and subsections to facilitate learning.

☑ You will also find other material enclosed in boxes.

These contain:

Short meanings

Additional information

More elaborate definitions

These are meant to assist and enrich the learning process, but are ***not intended for evaluation.***

☑ Each chapter ends with a set of ***timelines***. This is to be treated as background information, and ***not for evaluation***.

☑ There are ***figures, maps*** and ***sources*** numbered sequentially through each chapter.

(a) **Figures** include illustrations of artefacts such as tools, pottery, seals, coins, ornaments etc. as well as of inscriptions, sculptures, paintings, buildings, archaeological sites, plans and photographs of people and places; visual material that historians use as sources.

(b) Some chapters have **maps**.

Sources

(c) **Sources** are enclosed within separate boxes: these contain excerpts from a wide variety of texts and inscriptions. Both visual and textual sources will help you acquire a feel for the clues that historians use. You will also see how historians analyse these clues. **The final examination can include excerpts from and/or illustrations of identical/similar material, providing you with an opportunity to handle these.**

☑ There are *two* categories of ***intext questions:***

(a) those within a yellow box, which may be used for practice for ***evaluation***.

(b) those with the caption ➲ Discuss... which are ***not for evaluation***

☑ There are ***four types*** of assignments at the end of each chapter:
These include:

- **short questions**
- **short essays**
- **map work**
- **projects**

These are meant to provide practice for the final assessment and evaluation.

Hope you enjoy using this book.

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THEME FIVE

THROUGH THE EYES OF TRAVELLERS

PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIETY
(*C.* TENTH TO SEVENTEENTH CENTURY)

Women and men have travelled in search of work, to escape from natural disasters, as traders, merchants, soldiers, priests, pilgrims, or driven by a sense of adventure. Those who visit or come to stay in a new land invariably encounter a world that is different: in terms of the landscape or physical environment as well as customs, languages, beliefs and practices of people. Many of them try to adapt to these differences; others, somewhat exceptional, note them carefully in *accounts*, generally recording what they find unusual or remarkable. Unfortunately, we have practically no accounts of travel left by women, though we know that they travelled.

Fig. 5.1a
Paan *leaves*

The accounts that survive are often varied in terms of their subject matter. Some deal with affairs of the court, while others are mainly focused on religious issues, or architectural features and monuments. For example, one of the most important descriptions of the city of Vijayanagara (Chapter 7) in the fifteenth century comes from Abdur Razzaq Samarqandi, a diplomat who came visiting from Herat.

In a few cases, travellers did not go to distant lands. For example, in the Mughal Empire (Chapters 8 and 9), administrators sometimes travelled within the empire and recorded their observations. Some of them were interested in looking at popular customs and the folklore and traditions of their own land.

In this chapter we shall see how our knowledge of the past can be enriched through a consideration of descriptions of social life provided by travellers who visited the subcontinent, focusing on the accounts of three men: Al-Biruni who came from Uzbekistan (eleventh century), Ibn Battuta who came from Morocco, in northwestern Africa (fourteenth century) and the Frenchman François Bernier (seventeenth century).

Fig. 5.1b
A coconut
The coconut and the *paan* were things that struck many travellers as unusual.

As these authors came from vastly different social and cultural environments, they were often more attentive to everyday activities and practices which were taken for granted by indigenous writers, for whom these were routine matters, not worthy of being recorded. It is this difference in perspective that makes the accounts of travellers interesting. Who did these travellers write for? As we will see, the answers vary from one instance to the next.

Source 1

Al-Biruni's objectives

Al-Biruni described his work as:

> a help to those who want to discuss religious questions with them (the Hindus), and as a repertory of information to those who want to associate with them.

➲ Read the excerpt from Al-Biruni (Source 5) and discuss whether his work met these objectives.

1. AL-BIRUNI AND THE *KITAB-UL-HIND*

1.1 From Khwarizm to the Punjab

Al-Biruni was born in 973, in Khwarizm in present-day Uzbekistan. Khwarizm was an important centre of learning, and Al-Biruni received the best education available at the time. He was well versed in several languages: Syriac, Arabic, Persian, Hebrew and Sanskrit. Although he did not know Greek, he was familiar with the works of Plato and other Greek philosophers, having read them in Arabic translations. In 1017, when Sultan Mahmud invaded Khwarizm, he took several scholars and poets back to his capital, Ghazni; Al-Biruni was one of them. He arrived in Ghazni as a hostage, but gradually developed a liking for the city, where he spent the rest of his life until his death at the age of 70.

It was in Ghazni that Al-Biruni developed an interest in India. This was not unusual. Sanskrit works on astronomy, mathematics and medicine had been translated into Arabic from the eighth century onwards. When the Punjab became a part of the Ghaznavid empire, contacts with the local population helped create an environment of mutual trust and understanding. Al-Biruni spent years in the company of Brahmana priests and scholars, learning Sanskrit, and studying religious and philosophical texts. While his itinerary is not clear, it is likely that he travelled widely in the Punjab and parts of northern India.

Travel literature was already an accepted part of Arabic literature by the time he wrote. This literature dealt with lands as far apart as the Sahara desert in the west to the River Volga in the north. So, while

Translating texts, sharing ideas

Al-Biruni's expertise in several languages allowed him to compare languages and translate texts. He translated several Sanskrit works, including Patanjali's work on grammar, into Arabic. For his Brahmana friends, he translated the works of Euclid (a Greek mathematician) into Sanskrit.

few people in India would have read Al-Biruni before 1500, many others outside India may have done so.

1.2 The *Kitab-ul-Hind*

Al-Biruni's *Kitab-ul-Hind*, written in Arabic, is simple and lucid. It is a voluminous text, divided into 80 chapters on subjects such as religion and philosophy, festivals, astronomy, alchemy, manners and customs, social life, weights and measures, iconography, laws and metrology.

Generally (though not always), Al-Biruni adopted a distinctive structure in each chapter, beginning with a question, following this up with a description based on Sanskritic traditions, and concluding with a comparison with other cultures. Some present-day scholars have argued that this almost geometric structure, remarkable for its precision and predictability, owed much to his mathematical orientation.

Al-Biruni, who wrote in Arabic, probably intended his work for peoples living along the frontiers of the subcontinent. He was familiar with translations and adaptations of Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit texts into Arabic – these ranged from fables to works on astronomy and medicine. However, he was also critical about the ways in which these texts were written, and clearly wanted to improve on them.

Metrology is the science of measurement.

Hindu

The term "Hindu" was derived from an Old Persian word, used *c.* sixth-fifth centuries BCE, to refer to the region east of the river Sindhu (Indus). The Arabs continued the Persian usage and called this region "al-Hind" and its people "Hindi". Later the Turks referred to the people east of the Indus as "Hindu", their land as "Hindustan", and their language as "Hindavi". None of these expressions indicated the religious identity of the people. It was much later that the term developed religious connotations.

➲ Discuss...

If Al-Biruni lived in the twenty-first century, which are the areas of the world where he could have been easily understood, if he still knew the same languages?

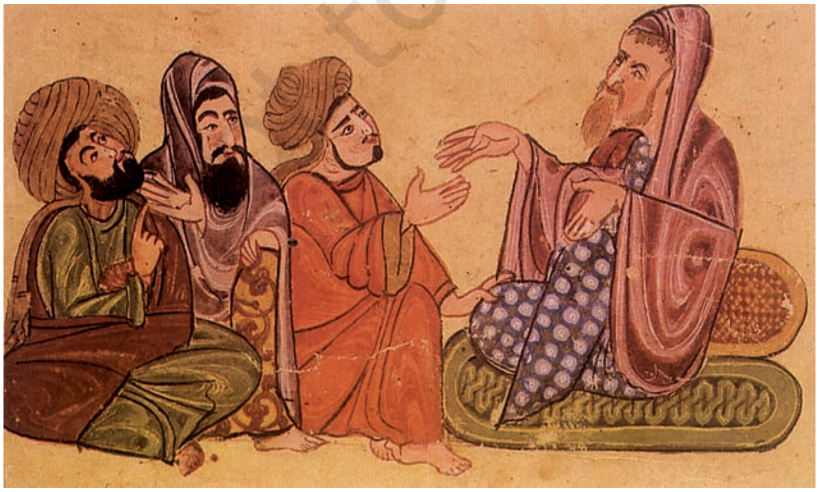


Fig. 5.2
An illustration from a thirteenth-century Arabic manuscript showing the Athenian statesman and poet Solon, who lived in the sixth century BCE, addressing his students
Notice the clothes they are shown in.

➲ Are these clothes Greek or Arabian?

2. IBN BATTUTA'S *RIHLA*

2.1 An early globe-trotter

Ibn Battuta's book of travels, called *Rihla,* written in Arabic, provides extremely rich and interesting details about the social and cultural life in the subcontinent in the fourteenth century. This Moroccan traveller was born in Tangier into one of the most respectable and educated families known for their expertise in Islamic religious law or *shari'a.* True to the tradition of his family, Ibn Battuta received literary and scholastic education when he was quite young.

Unlike most other members of his class, Ibn Battuta considered experience gained through travels to be a more important source of knowledge than books. He just loved travelling, and went to far-off places, exploring new worlds and peoples. Before he set off for India in 1332-33, he had made pilgrimage trips to Mecca, and had already travelled extensively in Syria, Iraq, Persia, Yemen, Oman and a few trading ports on the coast of East Africa.

Travelling overland through Central Asia, Ibn Battuta reached Sind in 1333. He had heard about Muhammad bin Tughlaq, the Sultan of Delhi, and lured by his reputation as a generous patron of arts and letters, set off for Delhi, passing through Multan and Uch. The Sultan was impressed by his scholarship, and appointed him the *qazi* or judge of Delhi. He remained in that position for several years, until he fell out of favour and was thrown into prison. Once the misunderstanding between him and the Sultan was cleared, he was restored to imperial service, and was ordered in 1342 to proceed to China as the Sultan's envoy to the Mongol ruler.

With the new assignment, Ibn Battuta proceeded to the Malabar coast through central India. From Malabar he went to the Maldives, where he stayed for eighteen months as the *qazi,* but eventually decided to proceed to Sri Lanka. He then went back once more to the Malabar coast and the Maldives, and before resuming his mission to China, visited Bengal and Assam as well. He took a ship to Sumatra, and from there another ship for the Chinese port town of

Source 2

The bird leaves its nest

This is an excerpt from the *Rihla:*

> My departure from Tangier, my birthplace, took place on Thursday ... I set out alone, having neither fellow-traveller ... nor caravan whose party I might join, but swayed by an overmastering impulse within me and a desire long-cherished in my bosom to visit these illustrious sanctuaries. So I braced my resolution to quit all my dear ones, female and male, and forsook my home as birds forsake their nests ... My age at that time was twenty-two years.

Ibn Battuta returned home in 1354, about 30 years after he had set out.

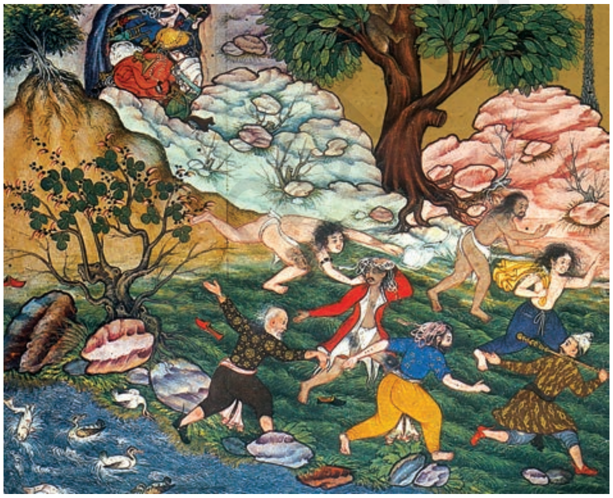


Fig. 5.3
Robbers attacking travellers, a sixteenth-century Mughal painting

➲ How can you distinguish the travellers from the robbers?

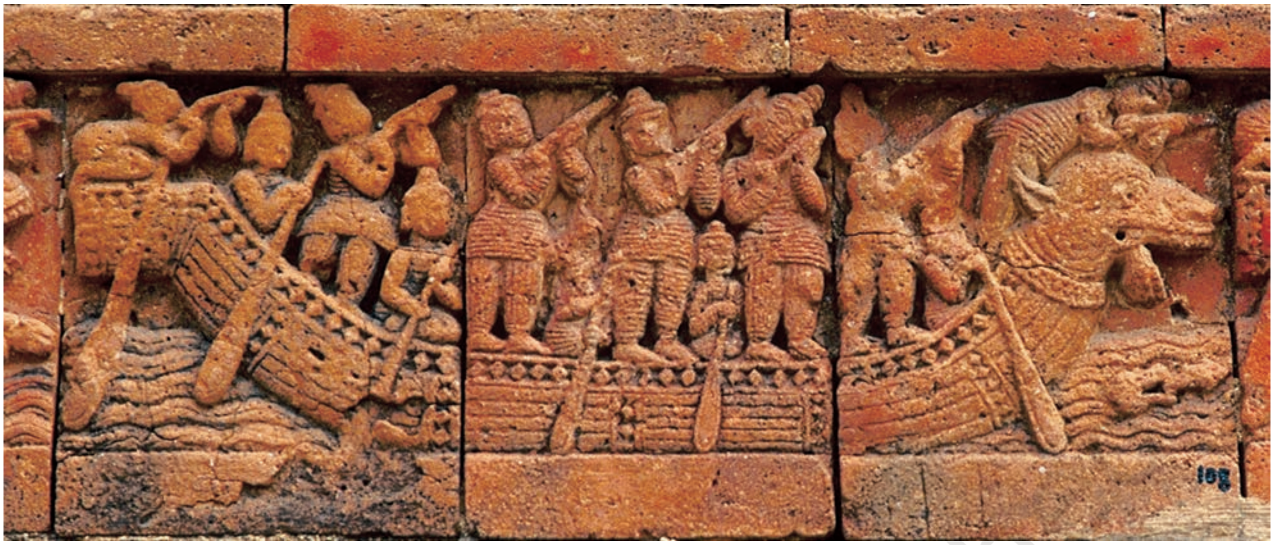


Fig. 5.4
A boat carrying passengers, a terracotta sculpture from a temple in Bengal (c. *seventeenth-eighteenth centuries)*

➲ Why do you think some of the passengers are carrying arms?

Zaytun (now known as Quanzhou). He travelled extensively in China, going as far as Beijing, but did not stay for long, deciding to return home in 1347. His account is often compared with that of Marco Polo, who visited China (and also India) from his home base in Venice in the late thirteenth century.

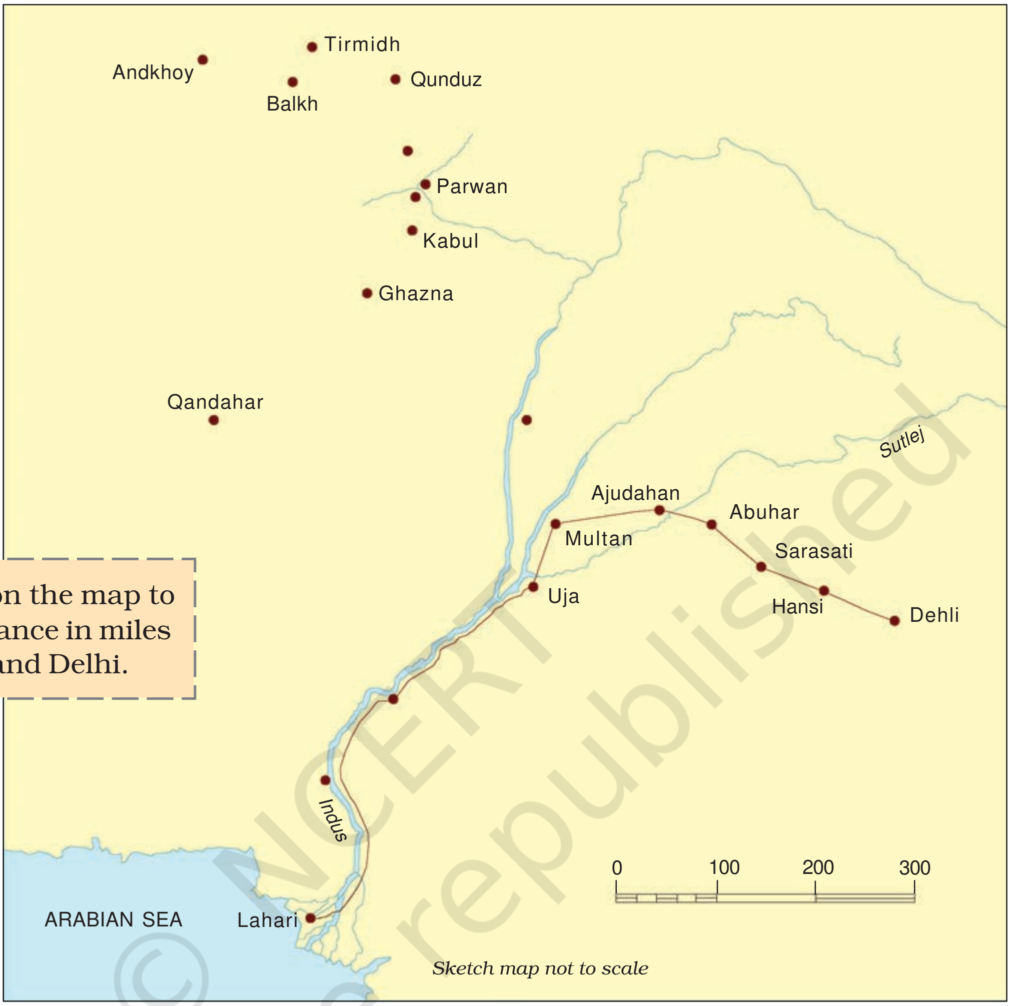
Ibn Battuta meticulously recorded his observations about new cultures, peoples, beliefs, values, etc. We need to bear in mind that this globe-trotter was travelling in the fourteenth century, when it was much more arduous and hazardous to travel than it is today. According to Ibn Battuta, it took forty days to travel from Multan to Delhi and about fifty days from Sind to Delhi. The distance from Daulatabad to Delhi was covered in forty days, while that from Gwalior to Delhi took ten days.

The lonely traveller

Robbers were not the only hazard on long journeys: the traveller could feel homesick, or fall ill. Here is an excerpt from the *Rihla:*

> I was attacked by the fever, and I actually tied myself on the saddle with a turban-cloth in case I should fall off by reason of my weakness ... So at last we reached the town of Tunis, and the townsfolk came out to welcome the *shaikh* ... and ... the son of the *qazi* ... On all sides they came forward with greetings and questions to one another, but not a soul said a word of greeting to me, since there was none of them I knew. I felt so sad at heart on account of my loneliness that I could not restrain the tears that started to my eyes, and wept bitterly. But one of the pilgrims, realising the cause of my distress, came up to me with a greeting ...

Map 1
Places visited by Ibn Battuta in Afghanistan, Sind and Punjab.
Many of the place-names have been spelt as Ibn Battuta would have known them.


Tirmidh
Andkhoy
Qunduz
Balkh
Parwan
Kabul
Ghazna
Qandahar
Sutlej
Ajudahan
Abuhar
Multan
Sarasati
Uja
Hansi
Dehli
Indus
0
100
200
300
ARABIAN SEA
Lahari
Sketch map not to scale

➲ Use the scale on the map to calculate the distance in miles between Multan and Delhi.

Travelling was also more insecure: Ibn Battuta was attacked by bands of robbers several times. In fact he preferred travelling in a caravan along with companions, but this did not deter highway robbers. While travelling from Multan to Delhi, for instance, his caravan was attacked and many of his fellow travellers lost their lives; those travellers who survived, including Ibn Battuta, were severely wounded.

2.2 The "enjoyment of curiosities"

As we have seen, Ibn Battuta was an inveterate traveller who spent several years travelling through north Africa, West Asia and parts of Central Asia (he may even have visited Russia), the Indian subcontinent and China, before returning to his native land, Morocco. When he returned, the local ruler issued instructions that his stories be recorded.

Source 3

Education and entertainment

This is what Ibn Juzayy, who was deputed to write what Ibn Battuta dictated, said in his introduction:

> A gracious direction was transmitted (by the ruler) that he (Ibn Battuta) should dictate an account of the cities which he had seen in his travel, and of the interesting events which had clung to his memory, and that he should speak of those whom he had met of the rulers of countries, of their distinguished men of learning, and their pious saints. Accordingly, he dictated upon these subjects a narrative which gave entertainment to the mind and delight to the ears and eyes, with a variety of curious particulars by the exposition of which he gave edification and of marvellous things, by referring to which he aroused interest.

In the footsteps of Ibn Battuta

In the centuries between 1400 and 1800 visitors to India wrote a number of travelogues in Persian. At the same time, Indian visitors to Central Asia, Iran and the Ottoman empire also sometimes wrote about their experiences. These writers followed in the footsteps of Al-Biruni and Ibn Battuta, and had sometimes read these earlier authors.

Among the best known of these writers were Abdur Razzaq Samarqandi, who visited south India in the 1440s, Mahmud Wali Balkhi, who travelled very widely in the 1620s, and Shaikh Ali Hazin, who came to north India in the 1740s. Some of these authors were fascinated by India, and one of them – Mahmud Balkhi – even became a sort of *sanyasi* for a time. Others such as Hazin were disappointed and even disgusted with India, where they expected to receive a red carpet treatment. Most of them saw India as a land of wonders.

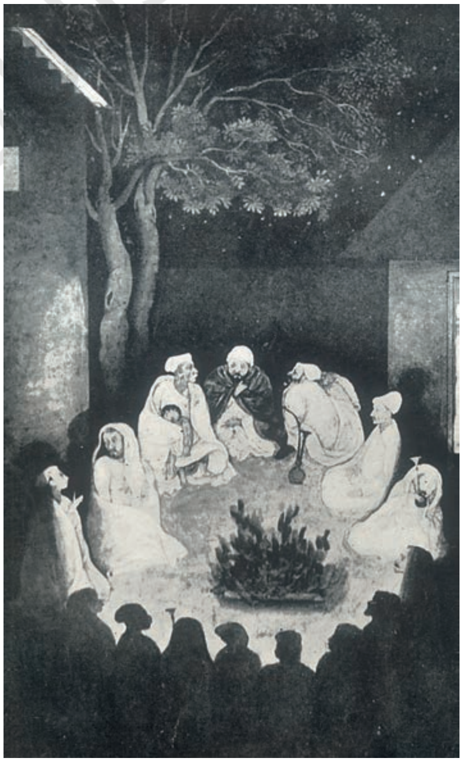


Fig. 5.5
An eighteenth-century painting depicting travellers gathered around a campfire

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➲ Discuss...

Compare the objectives of Al-Biruni and Ibn Battuta in writing their accounts.

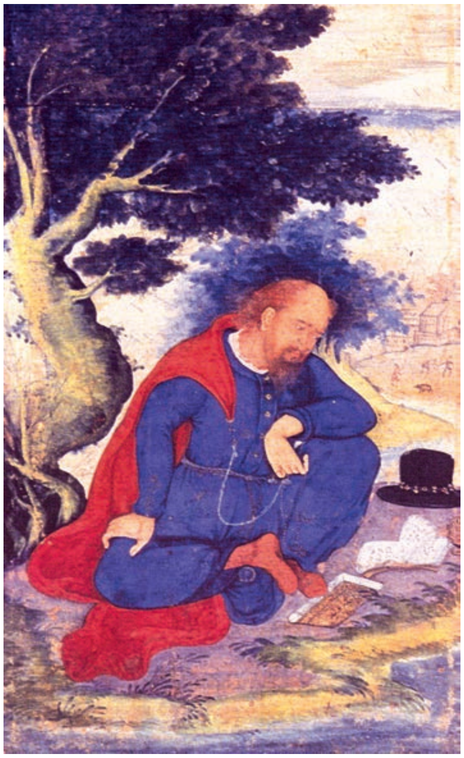


Fig. 5.6
A seventeenth-century painting depicting Bernier in European clothes

3. FRANÇOIS BERNIER
A DOCTOR WITH A DIFFERENCE

Once the Portuguese arrived in India in about 1500, a number of them wrote detailed accounts regarding Indian social customs and religious practices. A few of them, such as the Jesuit Roberto Nobili, even translated Indian texts into European languages.

Among the best known of the Portuguese writers is Duarte Barbosa, who wrote a detailed account of trade and society in south India. Later, after 1600, we find growing numbers of Dutch, English and French travellers coming to India. One of the most famous was the French jeweller Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, who travelled to India at least six times. He was particularly fascinated with the trading conditions in India, and compared India to Iran and the Ottoman empire. Some of these travellers, like the Italian doctor Manucci, never returned to Europe, and settled down in India.

François Bernier, a Frenchman, was a doctor, political philosopher and historian. Like many others, he came to the Mughal Empire in search of opportunities. He was in India for twelve years, from 1656 to 1668, and was closely associated with the Mughal court, as a physician to Prince Dara Shukoh, the eldest son of Emperor Shah Jahan, and later as an intellectual and scientist, with Danishmand Khan, an Armenian noble at the Mughal court.

3.1 Comparing "East" and "West"

Bernier travelled to several parts of the country, and wrote accounts of what he saw, frequently comparing what he saw in India with the situation in Europe. He dedicated his major writing to Louis XIV, the king of France, and many of his other works were written in the form of letters to influential officials and ministers. In virtually every instance Bernier described what he saw in India as a bleak situation in comparison to developments in Europe. As we will see, this assessment was not always accurate. However, when his works were published, Bernier's writings became extremely popular.

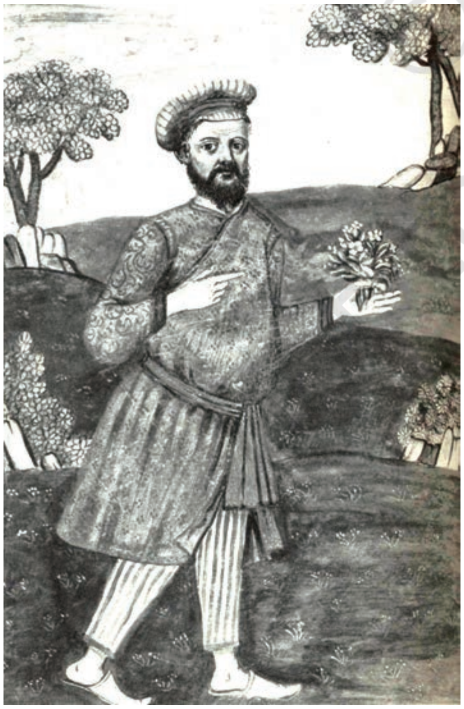


Fig. 5.7
A painting depicting Tavernier in Indian clothes

Source 4

Travelling with the Mughal army

Bernier often travelled with the army. This is an excerpt from his description of the army's march to Kashmir:

> I am expected to keep two good Turkoman horses, and I also take with me a powerful Persian camel and driver, a groom for my horses, a cook and a servant to go before my horse with a flask of water in his hand, according to the custom of the country. I am also provided with every useful article, such as a tent of moderate size, a carpet, a portable bed made of four very strong but light canes, a pillow, a mattress, round leather table-cloths used at meals, some few napkins of dyed cloth, three small bags with culinary utensils which are all placed in a large bag, and this bag is again carried in a very capacious and strong double sack or net made of leather thongs. This double sack likewise contains the provisions, linen and wearing apparel, both of master and servants. I have taken care to lay in a stock of excellent rice for five or six days' consumption, of sweet biscuits flavoured with anise (a herb), of limes and sugar. Nor have I forgotten a linen bag with its small iron hook for the purpose of suspending and draining *dahi* or curds; nothing being considered so refreshing in this country as lemonade and *dahi.*

➲ What are the things from Bernier's list that you would take on a journey today?

Bernier's works were published in France in 1670-71 and translated into English, Dutch, German and Italian within the next five years. Between 1670 and 1725 his account was reprinted eight times in French, and by 1684 it had been reprinted three times in English. This was in marked contrast to the accounts in Arabic and Persian, which circulated as manuscripts and were generally not published before 1800.

The creation and circulation of ideas about India

The writings of European travellers helped produce an image of India for Europeans through the printing and circulation of their books. Later, after 1750, when Indians like Shaikh Itisamuddin and Mirza Abu Talib visited Europe and confronted this image that Europeans had of their society, they tried to influence it by producing their own version of matters.

➲ Discuss...

There is a very rich travel literature in Indian languages. Find out about travel writers in the language you use at home. Read one such account and describe the areas visited by the traveller, what s/he saw, and why s/he wrote the account.

4. MAKING SENSE OF AN ALIEN WORLD AL-BIRUNI AND THE SANSKRITIC TRADITION

4.1 Overcoming barriers to understanding

As we have seen, travellers often compared what they saw in the subcontinent with practices with which they were familiar. Each traveller adopted distinct strategies to understand what they observed. Al-Biruni, for instance, was aware of the problems inherent in the task he had set himself. He discussed several "barriers" that he felt obstructed understanding. The first amongst these was language. According to him, Sanskrit was so different from Arabic and Persian that ideas and concepts could not be easily translated from one language into another.

The second barrier he identified was the difference in religious beliefs and practices. The self-absorption and consequent insularity of the local population according to him, constituted the third barrier. What is interesting is that even though he was aware of these problems, Al-Biruni depended almost exclusively on the works of Brahmanas, often citing passages from the Vedas, the Puranas, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the works of Patanjali, the *Manusmriti*, etc., to provide an understanding of Indian society.

4.2 Al-Biruni's description of the caste system

Al-Biruni tried to explain the caste system by looking for parallels in other societies. He noted that in ancient Persia, four social categories were recognised: those of knights and princes; monks, fire-priests and lawyers; physicians, astronomers and other scientists; and finally, peasants and artisans. In other words, he attempted to suggest that social divisions were not unique to India. At the same time he pointed out that within Islam all men were considered equal, differing only in their observance of piety.

In spite of his acceptance of the Brahmanical description of the caste system, Al-Biruni disapproved of the notion of pollution. He remarked that everything which falls into a state of impurity strives and succeeds in regaining its original condition of purity. The sun cleanses the air, and the salt in the sea prevents the water from becoming polluted. If it

A language with an enormous range

Al-Biruni described Sanskrit as follows:

> If you want to conquer this difficulty (i.e. to learn Sanskrit), you will not find it easy, because the language is of an enormous range, both in words and inflections, something like the Arabic, calling one and the same thing by various names, both original and derivative, and using one and the same word for a variety of subjects, which, in order to be properly understood, must be distinguished from each other by various qualifying epithets.

God knows best!

Travellers did not always believe what they were told. When faced with the story of a wooden idol that supposedly lasted for 216,432 years, Al-Biruni asks:

> How, then, could wood have lasted such a length of time, and particularly in a place where the air and the soil are rather wet? God knows best!

were not so, insisted Al-Biruni, life on earth would have been impossible. The conception of social pollution, intrinsic to the caste system, was according to him, contrary to the laws of nature.

Source 5

The system of varnas

This is Al-Biruni's account of the system of varnas:

> The highest caste are the Brahmana, of whom the books of the Hindus tell us that they were created from the head of Brahman. And as the Brahman is only another name for the force called *nature*, and the head is the highest part of the … body, the Brahmana are the choice part of the whole genus. Therefore the Hindus consider them as the very best of mankind.
>
> The next caste are the Kshatriya, who were created, as they say, from the shoulders and hands of Brahman. Their degree is not much below that of the Brahmana.
>
> After them follow the Vaishya, who were created from the thigh of Brahman.
>
> The Shudra, who were created from his feet . . .
>
> Between the latter two classes there is no very great distance. Much, however, as these classes differ from each other, they live together in the same towns and villages, mixed together in the same houses and lodgings.

➲ Compare what Al-Biruni wrote with Source 6, Chapter 3. Do you notice any similarities and differences? Do you think Al-Biruni depended only on Sanskrit texts for his information and understanding of Indian society?

As we have seen, Al-Biruni's description of the caste system was deeply influenced by his study of normative Sanskrit texts which laid down the rules governing the system from the point of view of the Brahmanas. However, in real life the system was not quite as rigid. For instance, the categories defined as *antyaja* (literally, born outside the system) were often expected to provide inexpensive labour to both peasants and zamindars (see also Chapter 8). In other words, while they were often subjected to social oppression, they were included within economic networks.

➲ **Discuss...**

How important is knowledge of the language of the area for a traveller from a different region?

5. IBN BATTUTA AND THE EXCITEMENT OF THE UNFAMILIAR

By the time Ibn Battuta arrived in Delhi in the fourteenth century, the subcontinent was part of a global network of communication that stretched from China in the east to north-west Africa and Europe in the west. As we have seen, Ibn Battuta himself travelled extensively through these lands, visiting sacred shrines, spending time with learned men and rulers, often officiating as *qazi*, and enjoying the cosmopolitan culture of urban centres where people who spoke Arabic, Persian, Turkish and other languages, shared ideas, information and anecdotes. These included stories about men noted for their piety, kings who could be both cruel and generous, and about the lives of ordinary men and women; anything that was unfamiliar was particularly highlighted in order to ensure that the listener or the reader was suitably impressed by accounts of distant yet accessible worlds.

5.1 The coconut and the *paan*

Some of the best examples of Ibn Battuta's strategies of representation are evident in the ways in which he described the coconut and the *paan*, two kinds of plant produce that were completely unfamiliar to his audience.

Source 6

Nuts like a man's head

The following is how Ibn Battuta described the coconut:

> These trees are among the most peculiar trees in kind and most astonishing in habit. They look exactly like date-palms, without any difference between them except that the one produces nuts as its fruits and the other produces dates. The nut of a coconut tree resembles a man's head, for in it are what look like two eyes and a mouth, and the inside of it when it is green looks like the brain, and attached to it is a fibre which looks like hair. They make from this cords with which they sew up ships instead of (using) iron nails, and they (also) make from it cables for vessels.

➲ What are the comparisons that Ibn Battuta makes to give his readers an idea about what coconuts looked like? Do you think these are appropriate? How does he convey a sense that this fruit is unusual? How accurate is his description?

Source 7

The *paan*

Read Ibn Battuta's description of the *paan:*

> The betel is a tree which is cultivated in the same manner as the grape-vine; … The betel has no fruit and is grown only for the sake of its leaves … The manner of its use is that before eating it one takes areca nut; this is like a nutmeg but is broken up until it is reduced to small pellets, and one places these in his mouth and chews them. Then he takes the leaves of betel, puts a little chalk on them, and masticates them along with the betel.

➲ Why do you think this attracted Ibn Battuta's attention? Is there anything you would like to add to this description?

5.2 Ibn Battuta and Indian cities

Ibn Battuta found cities in the subcontinent full of exciting opportunities for those who had the necessary drive, resources and skills. They were densely populated and prosperous, except for the occasional disruptions caused by wars and invasions. It appears from Ibn Battuta's account that most cities had crowded streets and bright and colourful markets that were stacked with a wide variety of goods. Ibn Battuta described Delhi as a vast city, with a great population, the largest in India. Daulatabad (in Maharashtra) was no less, and easily rivalled Delhi in size.

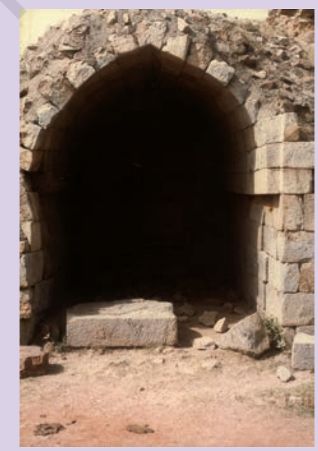
➲ What were the architectural features that Ibn Battuta noted?
Compare this description with the illustrations of the city shown in Figs. 5.8 and 5.9.

Source 8

Dehli

Here is an excerpt from Ibn Battuta's account of Delhi, often spelt as Dehli in texts of the period:

> The city of Dehli covers a wide area and has a large population ... The rampart round the city is without parallel. The breadth of its wall is eleven cubits; and inside it are houses for the night sentry and gate-keepers. Inside the ramparts, there are store-houses for storing edibles, magazines, ammunition, ballistas and siege machines. The grains that are stored (in these ramparts) can last for a long time, without rotting ... In the interior of the rampart, horsemen as well as infantrymen move from one end of the city to another. The rampart is pierced through by windows which open on the side of the city, and it is through these windows that light enters inside. The lower part of the rampart is built of stone; the upper part of bricks. It has many towers close to one another. There are twenty eight gates of this city which are called *darwaza*, and of these, the Budaun *darwaza* is the greatest; inside the Mandwi *darwaza* there is a grain market; adjacent to the Gul *darwaza* there is an orchard ... It (the city of Dehli) has a fine cemetery in which graves have domes over them, and those that do not have a dome, have an arch, for sure. In the cemetery they sow flowers such as tuberose, jasmine, wild rose, etc.; and flowers blossom there in all seasons.



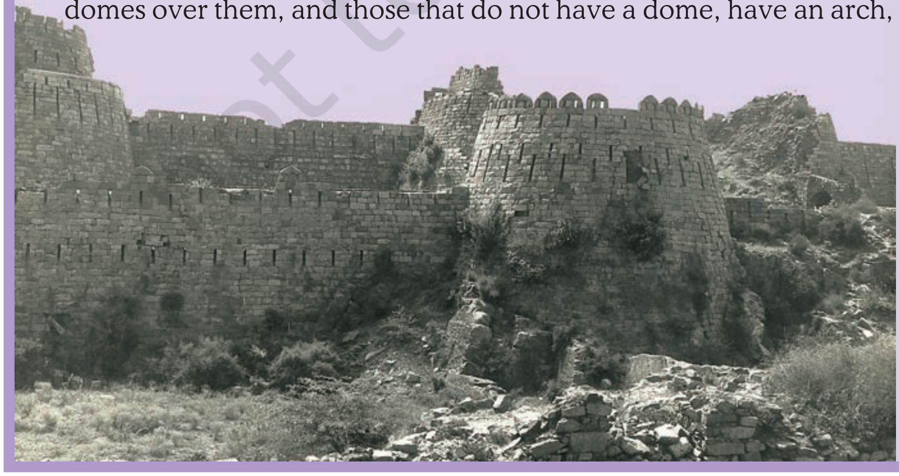


Fig. 5.8 (top)
An arch in Tughlakabad, Delhi

Fig. 5.9 (left)
Part of the fortification wall of the settlement

The bazaars were not only places of economic transactions, but also the hub of social and cultural activities. Most bazaars had a mosque and a temple, and in some of them at least, spaces were marked for public performances by dancers, musicians and singers.

While Ibn Battuta was not particularly concerned with explaining the prosperity of towns, historians have used his account to suggest that towns derived a significant portion of their wealth through the appropriation of surplus from villages. Ibn Battuta found Indian agriculture very productive because of the fertility of the soil, which allowed farmers to cultivate two crops a year. He also noted that the subcontinent was well integrated with inter-Asian networks of trade and commerce, with Indian manufactures being in great demand in both West Asia and Southeast Asia, fetching huge profits for artisans and merchants. Indian textiles, particularly cotton cloth, fine muslins, silks, brocade and satin, were in great demand. Ibn Battuta informs us that certain varieties of fine muslin were so expensive that they could be worn only by the nobles and the very rich.

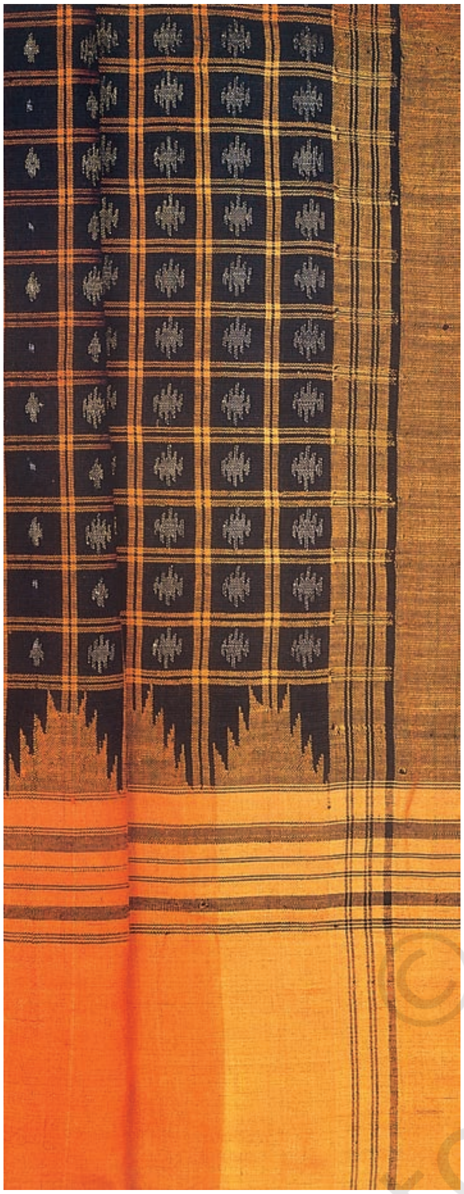


Fig. 5.10
Ikat *weaving patterns such as this were adopted and modified at several coastal production centres in the subcontinent and in Southeast Asia.*

Source 9

Music in the market

Read Ibn Battuta's description of Daulatabad:

> In Daulatabad there is a market place for male and female singers, which is known as Tarababad. It is one of the greatest and most beautiful bazaars. It has numerous shops and every shop has a door which leads into the house of the owner ... The shops are decorated with carpets and at the centre of a shop there is a swing on which sits the female singer. She is decked with all kinds of finery and her female attendants swing her. In the middle of the market place there stands a large cupola, which is carpeted and decorated and in which the chief of the musicians takes his place every Thursday after the dawn prayers, accompanied by his servants and slaves. The female singers come in successive crowds, sing before him and dance until dusk after which he withdraws. In this bazaar there are mosques for offering prayers ... One of the Hindu rulers ... alighted at the cupola every time he passed by this market place, and the female singers would sing before him. Even some Muslim rulers did the same.

➲ Why do you think Ibn Battuta highlighted these activities in his description?

5.3 A unique system of communication

The state evidently took special measures to encourage merchants. Almost all trade routes were well supplied with inns and guest houses. Ibn Battuta was also amazed by the efficiency of the postal system which allowed merchants to not only send information and remit credit across long distances, but also to dispatch goods required at short notice. The postal system was so efficient that while it took fifty days to reach Delhi from Sind, the news reports of spies would reach the Sultan through the postal system in just five days.

Source 10

On horse and on foot

This is how Ibn Battuta describes the postal system:

> In India the postal system is of two kinds. The horse-post, called *uluq,* is run by royal horses stationed at a distance of every four miles. The foot-post has three stations per mile; it is called *dawa,* that is one-third of a mile ... Now, at every third of a mile there is a well-populated village, outside which are three pavilions in which sit men with girded loins ready to start. Each of them carries a rod, two cubits in length, with copper bells at the top. When the courier starts from the city he holds the letter in one hand and the rod with its bells on the other; and he runs as fast as he can. When the men in the pavilion hear the ringing of the bell they get ready. As soon as the courier reaches them, one of them takes the letter from his hand and runs at top speed shaking the rod all the while until he reaches the next *dawa.* And the same process continues till the letter reaches its destination. This foot-post is quicker than the horse-post; and often it is used to transport the fruits of Khurasan which are much desired in India.

➲ Do you think the foot-post system could have operated throughout the subcontinent?

A strange nation?

The travelogue of Abdur Razzaq written in the 1440s is an interesting mixture of emotions and perceptions. On the one hand, he did not appreciate what he saw in the port of Calicut (present-day Kozhikode) in Kerala, which was populated by "a people the likes of whom I had never imagined", describing them as "a strange nation".

Later in his visit to India, he arrived in Mangalore, and crossed the Western Ghats. Here he saw a temple that filled him with admiration:

> Within three leagues (about nine miles of Mangalore, I saw an idol-house the likes of which is not to be found in all the world. It was a square, approximately ten yards a side, five yards in height, all covered with cast bronze, with four porticos. In the entrance portico was a statue in the likeness of a human being, full stature, made of gold. It had two red rubies for eyes, so cunningly made that you would say it could see. What craft and artisanship!

➲ Discuss...

How did Ibn Battuta handle the problem of describing things or situations to people who had not seen or experienced them?

6. BERNIER AND THE "DEGENERATE" EAST

If Ibn Battuta chose to describe everything that impressed and excited him because of its novelty, François Bernier belonged to a different intellectual tradition. He was far more preoccupied with comparing and contrasting what he saw in India with the situation in Europe in general and France in particular, focusing on situations which he considered depressing. His idea seems to have been to influence policy-makers and the intelligentsia to ensure that they made what he considered to be the "right" decisions.

Bernier's *Travels in the Mughal Empire* is marked by detailed observations, critical insights and reflection. His account contains discussions trying to place the history of the Mughals within some sort of a universal framework. He constantly compared Mughal India with contemporary Europe, generally emphasising the superiority of the latter. His representation of India works on the model of binary opposition, where India is presented as the inverse of Europe. He also ordered the perceived differences hierarchically, so that India appeared to be inferior to the Western world.

6.1 The question of landownership

According to Bernier, one of the fundamental differences between Mughal India and Europe was the lack of private property in land in the former. He was a firm believer in the virtues of private property, and saw crown ownership of land as being harmful for both the state and its people. He thought that in the Mughal Empire the emperor owned all the land and distributed it among his nobles, and that this had disastrous consequences for the economy and society. This perception was not unique to Bernier, but is found in most travellers' accounts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Owing to crown ownership of land, argued Bernier, landholders could not pass on their land to their children. So they were averse to any long-term investment in the sustenance and expansion of production. The absence of private property in land had, therefore, prevented the emergence of the class of "improving" landlords (as in Western Europe) with

Widespread poverty

Pelsaert, a Dutch traveller, visited the subcontinent during the early decades of the seventeenth century. Like Bernier, he was shocked to see the widespread poverty, "poverty so great and miserable that the life of the people can be depicted or accurately described only as the home of stark want and the dwelling place of bitter woe". Holding the state responsible, he says: "So much is wrung from the peasants that even dry bread is scarcely left to fill their stomachs."

a concern to maintain or improve the land. It had led to the uniform ruination of agriculture, excessive oppression of the peasantry and a continuous decline in the living standards of all sections of society, except the ruling aristocracy.

Source 11

The poor peasant

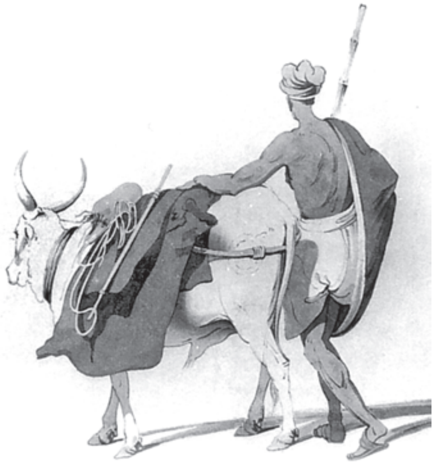
An excerpt from Bernier's description of the peasantry in the countryside:

> Of the vast tracts of country constituting the empire of Hindustan, many are little more than sand, or barren mountains, badly cultivated, and thinly populated. Even a considerable portion of the good land remains untilled for want of labourers; many of whom perish in consequence of the bad treatment they experience from Governors. The poor people, when they become incapable of discharging the demands of their rapacious lords, are not only often deprived of the means of subsistence, but are also made to lose their children, who are carried away as slaves. Thus, it happens that the peasantry, driven to despair by so excessive a tyranny, abandon the country.

In this instance, Bernier was participating in contemporary debates in Europe concerning the nature of state and society, and intended that his description of Mughal India would serve as a warning to those who did not recognise the "merits" of private property.

➲ What, according to Bernier, were the problems faced by peasants in the subcontinent? Do you think his description would have served to strengthen his case?

Fig. 5.11
Drawings such as this nineteenth-century example often reinforced the notion of an unchanging rural society.



As an extension of this, Bernier described Indian society as consisting of undifferentiated masses of impoverished people, subjugated by a small minority of a very rich and powerful ruling class. Between the poorest of the poor and the richest of the rich, there was no social group or class worth the name. Bernier confidently asserted: "There is no middle state in India."

Source 12

A warning for Europe

Bernier warned that if European kings followed the Mughal model:

> Their kingdoms would be very far from being well-cultivated and peopled, so well built, so rich, so polite and flourishing as we see them. Our kings are otherwise rich and powerful; and we must avow that they are much better and more royally served. They would soon be kings of deserts and solitudes, of beggars and barbarians, such as those are whom I have been representing (the Mughals) … We should find the great Cities and the great Burroughs (boroughs) rendered uninhabitable because of ill air, and to fall to ruine (ruin) without any bodies (anybody) taking care of repairing them; the hillocks abandon'd, and the fields overspread with bushes, or fill'd with pestilential marishes (marshes), as hath been already intimated.

➲ How does Bernier depict a scenario of doom? Once you have read Chapters 8 and 9, return to this description and analyse it again.

This, then, is how Bernier saw the Mughal Empire – its king was the king of "beggars and barbarians"; its cities and towns were ruined and contaminated with "ill air"; and its fields, "overspread with bushes" and full of "pestilential marishes". And, all this was because of one reason: crown ownership of land.

Curiously, none of the Mughal official documents suggest that the state was the sole owner of land. For instance, Abu'l Fazl, the sixteenth-century official chronicler of Akbar's reign, describes the land revenue as "remunerations of sovereignty", a claim made by the ruler on his subjects for the protection he provided rather than as rent on land that he owned. It is possible that European travellers regarded such claims as rent because land revenue demands were often very high. However, this was actually not a rent or even a land tax, but a tax on the crop (for more details, see Chapter 8).

Bernier's descriptions influenced Western theorists from the eighteenth century onwards. The French philosopher Montesquieu, for instance, used this account to develop the idea of oriental despotism, according to which rulers in Asia (the Orient or the East) enjoyed absolute authority over their subjects, who were kept in conditions of subjugation and poverty, arguing that all land belonged to the king and that private property was non-existent. According to this view, everybody, except the emperor and his nobles, barely managed to survive.

This idea was further developed as the concept of the Asiatic mode of production by Karl Marx in the nineteenth century. He argued that in India (and other Asian countries), before colonialism, surplus was appropriated by the state. This led to the emergence of a society that was composed of a large number of autonomous and (internally) egalitarian village communities. The imperial court presided over these village communities, respecting their autonomy as long as the flow of surplus was unimpeded. This was regarded as a stagnant system.

However, as we will see (Chapter 8), this picture of rural society was far from true. In fact, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, rural society was characterised by considerable social and economic differentiation. At one end of the spectrum were the big zamindars, who enjoyed superior rights in land and, at the other, the "untouchable" landless labourers. In between was the big peasant, who used hired labour and engaged in commodity production, and the smaller peasant who could barely produce for his subsistence.

6.2 A more complex social reality

While Bernier's preoccupation with projecting the Mughal state as tyrannical is obvious, his descriptions occasionally hint at a more complex social reality. For instance, he felt that artisans had no incentive to improve the quality of their manufactures, since profits were appropriated by the state. Manufactures were, consequently, everywhere in decline. At the same time, he conceded that vast quantities of the world's precious metals flowed into India, as manufactures were exported in exchange for gold and silver. He also noticed the existence of a prosperous merchant community, engaged in long-distance exchange.

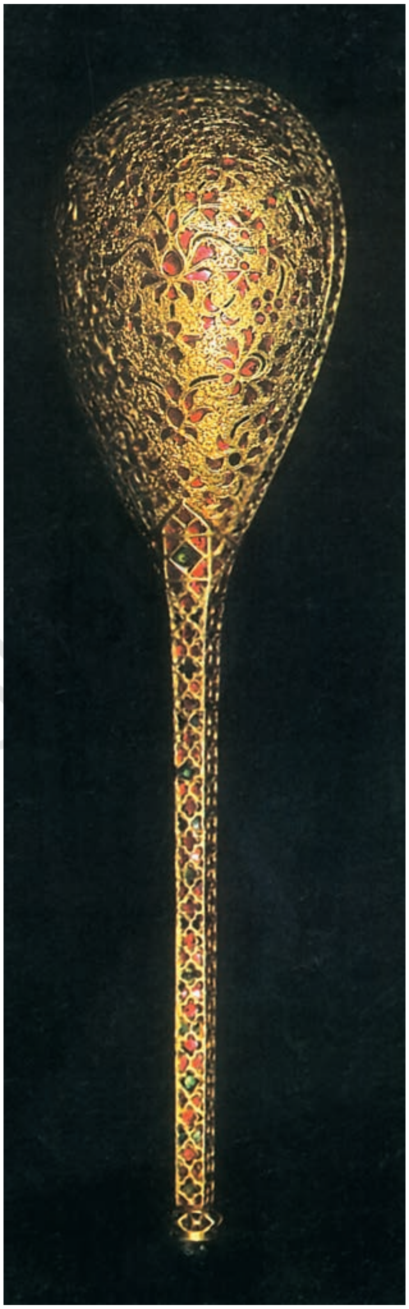


Fig. 5.12
A gold spoon studded with emeralds and rubies, an example of the dexterity of Mughal artisans

Source 13

A different socio-economic scenario

Read this excerpt from Bernier's description of both agriculture and craft production:

> It is important to observe, that of this vast tract of country, a large portion is extremely fertile; the large kingdom of Bengale (Bengal), for instance, surpassing Egypt itself, not only in the production of rice, corn, and other necessaries of life, but of innumerable articles of commerce which are not cultivated in Egypt; such as silks, cotton, and indigo. There are also many parts of the Indies, where the population is sufficiently abundant, and the land pretty well tilled; and where the artisan, although naturally indolent, is yet compelled by necessity or otherwise to employ himself in manufacturing carpets, brocades, embroideries, gold and silver cloths, and the various sorts of silk and cotton goods, which are used in the country or exported abroad.
>
> It should not escape notice that gold and silver, after circulating in every other quarter of the globe, come at length to be swallowed up, lost in some measure, in Hindustan.

➲ In what ways is the description in this excerpt different from that in Source 11?

Source 14

The imperial *karkhanas*

Bernier is perhaps the only historian who provides a detailed account of the working of the imperial *karkhanas* or workshops:

> Large halls are seen at many places, called *karkhanas* or workshops for the artisans. In one hall, embroiderers are busily employed, superintended by a master. In another, you see the goldsmiths; in a third, painters; in a fourth, varnishers in lacquer-work; in a fifth, joiners, turners, tailors and shoe-makers; in a sixth, manufacturers of silk, brocade and fine muslins …
>
> The artisans come every morning to their *karkhanas* where they remain employed the whole day; and in the evening return to their homes. In this quiet regular manner, their time glides away; no one aspiring for any improvement in the condition of life wherein he happens to be born.

➲ How does Bernier convey a sense that although there was a great deal of activity, there was little progress?

In fact, during the seventeenth century about 15 per cent of the population lived in towns. This was, on average, higher than the proportion of urban population in Western Europe in the same period. In spite of this Bernier described Mughal cities as "camp towns", by which he meant towns that owed their existence, and depended for their survival, on the imperial camp. He believed that these came into existence when the imperial court moved in and rapidly declined when it moved out. He suggested that they did not have viable social and economic foundations but were dependent on imperial patronage.

As in the case of the question of landownership, Bernier was drawing an oversimplified picture. There were all kinds of towns: manufacturing towns, trading towns, port-towns, sacred centres, pilgrimage towns, etc. Their existence is an index of the prosperity of merchant communities and professional classes.

Merchants often had strong community or kin ties, and were organised into their own caste-cum-occupational bodies. In western India these groups were called *mahajans*, and their chief, the *sheth*. In urban centres such as Ahmedabad the *mahajans* were collectively represented by the chief of the merchant community who was called the *nagarsheth.*

Other urban groups included professional classes such as physicians (*hakim* or *vaid*), teachers (*pundit* or *mulla*), lawyers (*wakil*), painters, architects, musicians, calligraphers, etc. While some depended on imperial patronage, many made their living by serving other patrons, while still others served ordinary people in crowded markets or bazaars.

➲ Discuss...

Why do you think scholars like Bernier chose to compare India with Europe?

7. WOMEN

SLAVES, SATI AND LABOURERS

Travellers who left written accounts were generally men who were interested in and sometimes intrigued by the condition of women in the subcontinent. Sometimes they took social inequities for granted as a "natural" state of affairs. For instance, slaves were openly sold in markets, like any other commodity, and were regularly exchanged as gifts. When Ibn Battuta reached Sind he purchased "horses, camels and slaves" as gifts for Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq. When he reached Multan, he presented the governor with, "a slave and horse together with raisins and almonds". Muhammad bin Tughlaq, informs Ibn Battuta, was so happy with the sermon of a preacher named Nasiruddin that he gave him "a hundred thousand *tankas* (coins) and two hundred slaves".

It appears from Ibn Battuta's account that there was considerable differentiation among slaves. Some female slaves in the service of the Sultan were experts in music and dance, and Ibn Battuta enjoyed their performance at the wedding of the Sultan's sister. Female slaves were also employed by the Sultan to keep a watch on his nobles.

Slaves were generally used for domestic labour, and Ibn Battuta found their services particularly indispensable for carrying women and men on palanquins or *dola.* The price of slaves, particularly female slaves required for domestic labour, was very low, and most families who could afford to do so kept at least one or two of them.

Contemporary European travellers and writers often highlighted the treatment of women as a crucial marker of difference between Western and Eastern societies. Not surprisingly, Bernier chose the practice of sati for detailed description. He noted that while some women seemed to embrace death cheerfully, others were forced to die.

Source 15

Slave women

Ibn Battuta informs us:

> It is the habit of the emperor ... to keep with every noble, great or small, one of his slaves who spies on the nobles. He also appoints female scavengers who enter the houses unannounced; and to them the slave girls communicate all the information they possess.

Most female slaves were captured in raids and expeditions.

Source 16

The child sati

This is perhaps one of the most poignant descriptions by Bernier:

> At Lahore I saw a most beautiful young widow sacrificed, who could not, I think, have been more than twelve years of age. The poor little creature appeared more dead than alive when she approached the dreadful pit: the agony of her mind cannot be described; she trembled and wept bitterly; but three or four of the Brahmanas, assisted by an old woman who held her under the arm, forced the unwilling victim toward the fatal spot, seated her on the wood, tied her hands and feet, lest she should run away, and in that situation the innocent creature was burnt alive. I found it difficult to repress my feelings and to prevent their bursting forth into clamorous and unavailing rage ...

➲ Discuss...

Why do you think the lives of ordinary women workers did not attract the attention of travellers such as Ibn Battuta and Bernier?

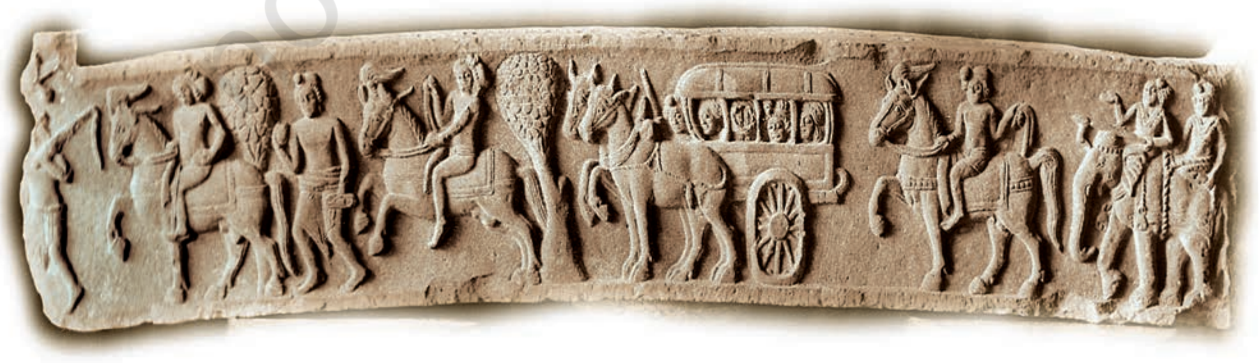
However, women's lives revolved around much else besides the practice of sati. Their labour was crucial in both agricultural and non-agricultural production. Women from merchant families participated in commercial activities, sometimes even taking mercantile disputes to the court of law. It therefore seems unlikely that women were confined to the private spaces of their homes.

You may have noticed that travellers' accounts provide us with a tantalising glimpse of the lives of men and women during these centuries. However, their observations were often shaped by the contexts from which they came. At the same time, there were many aspects of social life that these travellers did not notice.

Also relatively unknown are the experiences and observations of men (and possibly women) from the subcontinent who crossed seas and mountains and ventured into lands beyond the subcontinent. What did they see and hear? How were their relations with peoples of distant lands shaped? What were the languages they used? These and other questions will hopefully be systematically addressed by historians in the years to come.

Fig. 5.13
A sculpted panel from Mathura depicting travellers

➲ What are the various modes of transport that are shown?



TIMELINE
SOME TRAVELLERS WHO LEFT ACCOUNTS

Tenth-eleventh centuries	
973-1048	Muhammad ibn Ahmad Abu Raihan al-Biruni (from Uzbekistan)
Thirteenth century	
1254-1323	Marco Polo (from Italy)
Fourteenth century	
1304-77	Ibn Battuta (from Morocco)
Fifteenth century	
1413-82	Abd al-Razzaq Kamal al-Din ibn Ishaq al-Samarqandi (from Samarqand)
1466-72 (years spent in India)	Afanasii Nikitich Nikitin (fifteenth century, from Russia)
Sixteenth century	
1518 (visit to India)	Duarte Barbosa, d.1521 (from Portugal)
1562 (year of death)	Seydi Ali Reis (from Turkey)
1536-1600	Antonio Monserrate (from Spain)
Seventeenth century	
1626-31 (years spent in India)	Mahmud Wali Balkhi (from Balkh)
1600-67	Peter Mundy (from England)
1605-89	Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (from France)
1620-88	François Bernier (from France)

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, the dates mentioned are those of the lifespan of the traveller.

ANSWER IN 100-150 WORDS

1. Write a note on the *Kitab-ul-Hind.*
2. Compare and contrast the perspectives from which Ibn Battuta and Bernier wrote their accounts of their travels in India.
3. Discuss the picture of urban centres that emerges from Bernier's account.
4. Analyse the evidence for slavery provided by Ibn Battuta.
5. What were the elements of the practice of sati that drew the attention of Bernier?

WRITE A SHORT ESSAY (ABOUT 250-300 WORDS) ON THE FOLLOWING:

6. Discuss Al-Biruni's understanding of the caste system.
7. Do you think Ibn Battuta's account is useful in arriving at an understanding of life in contemporary urban centres? Give reasons for your answer.
8. Discuss the extent to which Bernier's account enables historians to reconstruct contemporary rural society.
9. Read this excerpt from Bernier:

> Numerous are the instances of handsome pieces of workmanship made by persons destitute of tools, and who can scarcely be said to have received instruction from a master. Sometimes they imitate so perfectly articles of European manufacture that the difference between the original and copy can hardly be discerned. Among other things, the Indians make excellent muskets, and fowling-pieces, and such beautiful gold ornaments that it may be doubted if the exquisite workmanship of those articles can be exceeded by any European goldsmith. I have often admired the beauty, softness, and delicacy of their paintings.

List the crafts mentioned in the passage. Compare these with the descriptions of artisanal activity in the chapter.

MAP WORK

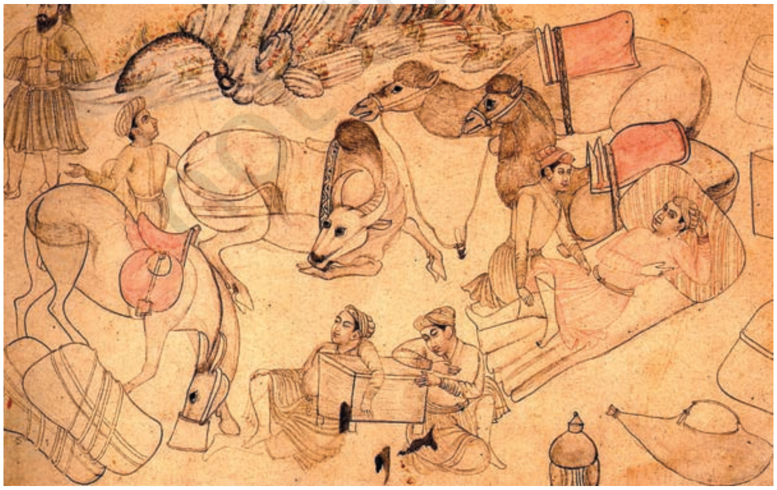
10. On an outline map of the world mark the countries visited by Ibn Battuta. What are the seas that he may have crossed?

PROJECTS (CHOOSE ONE)

11. Interview any one of your older relatives (mother/father/grandparents/uncles/aunts) who has travelled outside your town or village. Find out (a) where they went, (b) how they travelled, (c) how long did it take, (d) why did they travel (e) and did they face any difficulties. List as many similarities and differences that they may have noticed between their place of residence and the place they visited, focusing on language, clothes, food, customs, buildings, roads, the lives of men and women. Write a report on your findings.

12. For any one of the travellers mentioned in the chapter, find out more about his life and writings. Prepare a report on his travels, noting in particular how he described society, and comparing these descriptions with the excerpts included in the chapter.

Fig. 5.14
A painting depicting travellers at rest



If you would like to know more, read:

Muzaffar Alam and
Sanjay Subrahmanyam. 2006.
Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400-1800.
Cambridge University Press,
Cambridge.

Catherine Asher and Cynthia
Talbot. 2006.
India Before Europe.
Cambridge University Press,
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François Bernier. nd.
Travels in the Mogul Empire
AD 1656-1668.
Low Price Publications,
New Delhi.

H.A.R. Gibb (ed.). 1993.
The Travels of Ibn Battuta.
Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

Mushirul Hasan (ed.). 2005.
Westward Bound:
Travels of Mirza Abu Talib.
Oxford University Press,
New Delhi.

H.K. Kaul (ed.). 1997.
Travellers' India – an Anthology.
Oxford University Press,
New Delhi.

Jean-Baptiste Tavernier. 1993.
Travels in India.
Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

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THEME
SIX

BHAKTI-SUFI TRADITIONS

CHANGES IN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND DEVOTIONAL TEXTS

(C. EIGHTH TO EIGHTEENTH CENTURY)

We saw in Chapter 4 that by the mid-first millennium CE the landscape of the subcontinent was dotted with a variety of religious structures – stupas, monasteries, temples. If these typified certain religious beliefs and practices, others have been reconstructed from textual traditions, including the Puranas, many of which received their present shape around the same time, and yet others remain only faintly visible in textual and visual records.

New textual sources available from this period include compositions attributed to poet-saints, most of whom expressed themselves orally in regional languages used by ordinary people. These compositions, which were often set to music, were compiled by disciples or devotees, generally after the death of the poet-saint. What is more, these traditions were fluid – generations of devotees tended to elaborate on the original message, and occasionally modified or even abandoned some of the ideas that appeared problematic or irrelevant in different political, social or cultural contexts. Using these sources thus poses a challenge to historians.

Historians also draw on hagiographies or biographies of saints written by their followers (or members of their religious sect). These may not be literally accurate, but allow a glimpse into the ways in which devotees perceived the lives of these path-breaking women and men.

As we will see, these sources provide us with insights into a scenario characterised by dynamism and diversity. Let us look at some elements of these more closely.

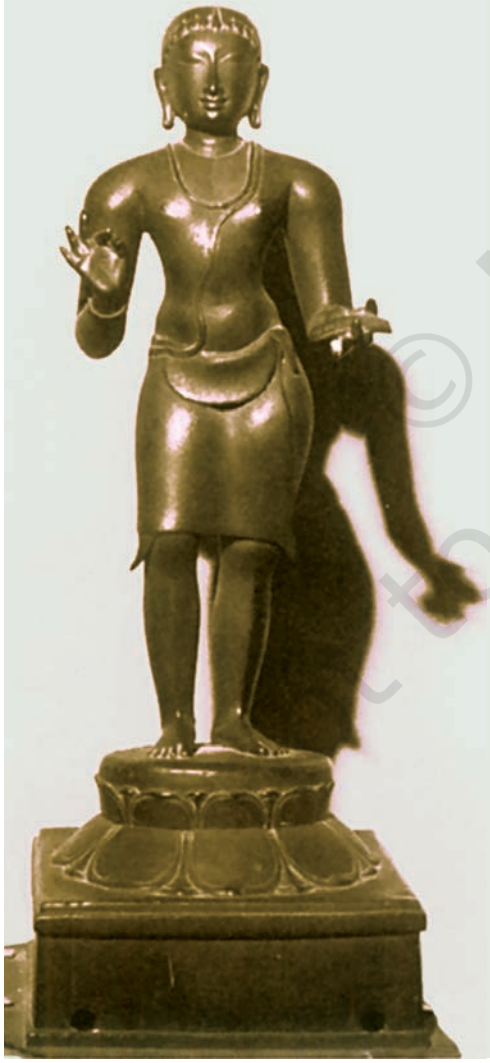


Fig. 6.1
A twelfth-century bronze sculpture of Manikkavachakar, a devotee of Shiva who composed beautiful devotional songs in Tamil

1. A MOSAIC OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Perhaps the most striking feature of this phase is the increasing visibility of a wide range of gods and goddesses in sculpture as well as in texts. At one level, this indicates the continued and even extended worship of the major deities – Vishnu, Shiva and the goddess – each of whom was visualised in a variety of forms.

1.1 The integration of cults

Historians who have tried to understand these developments suggest that there were at least two processes at work. One was a process of disseminating Brahmanical ideas. This is exemplified by the composition, compilation and preservation of Puranic texts in simple Sanskrit verse, explicitly meant to be accessible to women and Shudras, who were generally excluded from Vedic learning. At the same time, there was a second process at work – that of the Brahmanas accepting and reworking the beliefs and practices of these and other social categories. In fact, many beliefs and practices were shaped through a continuous dialogue between what sociologists have described as "great" Sanskritic Puranic traditions and "little" traditions throughout the land.

One of the most striking examples of this process is evident at Puri, Orissa, where the principal deity was identified, by the twelfth century, as Jagannatha (literally, the lord of the world), a form of Vishnu.

"Great" and "little" traditions

The terms great and little traditions were coined by a sociologist named Robert Redfield in the twentieth century to describe the cultural practices of peasant societies. He found that peasants observed rituals and customs that emanated from dominant social categories, including priests and rulers. These he classified as part of a great tradition. At the same time, peasants also followed local practices that did not necessarily correspond with those of the great tradition. These he included within the category of little tradition. He also noticed that both great and little traditions changed over time, through a process of interaction.

While scholars accept the significance of these categories and processes, they are often uncomfortable with the hierarchy suggested by the terms great and little. The use of quotation marks for "great" and "little" is one way of indicating this.

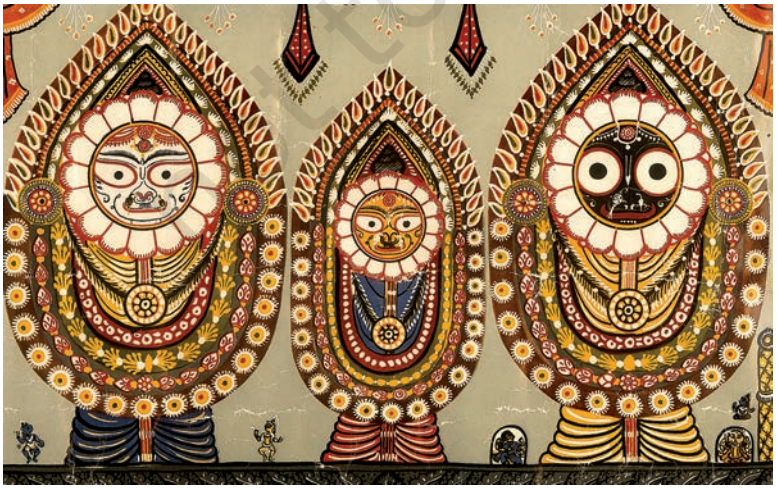


Fig. 6.2
Jagannatha (extreme right) with his sister Subhadra (centre) and his brother Balarama (left)

If you compare Fig. 6.2 with Fig. 4.26 (Chapter 4) you will notice that the deity is represented in a very different way. In this instance, a local deity, whose image was and continues to be made of wood by local tribal specialists, was recognised as a form of Vishnu. At the same time, Vishnu was visualised in a way that was very different from that in other parts of the country.

Such instances of integration are evident amongst goddess cults as well. Worship of the goddess, often simply in the form of a stone smeared with ochre, was evidently widespread. These local deities were often incorporated within the Puranic framework by providing them with an identity as a wife of the principal male deities – sometimes they were equated with Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu, in other instances, with Parvati, the wife of Shiva.

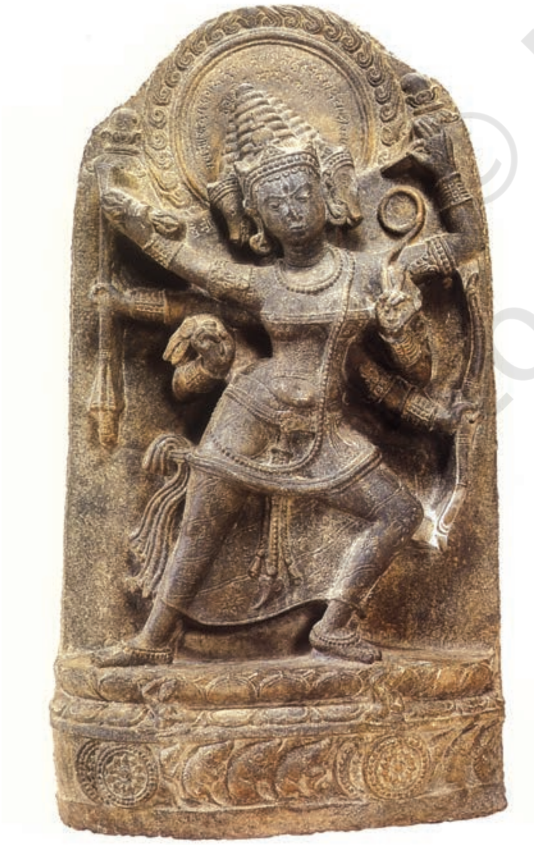


Fig. 6.3
*Sculpture of a Buddhist goddess, Marichi (*c.*tenth century, Bihar), an example of the process of integration of different religious beliefs and practices*

1.2 Difference and conflict

Often associated with the goddess were forms of worship that were classified as Tantric. Tantric practices were widespread in several parts of the subcontinent – they were open to women and men, and practitioners often ignored differences of caste and class within the ritual context. Many of these ideas influenced Shaivism as well as Buddhism, especially in the eastern, northern and southern parts of the subcontinent.

All of these somewhat divergent and even disparate beliefs and practices would come to be classified as Hindu over the course of the next millennium. The divergence is perhaps most stark if we compare Vedic and Puranic traditions. The principal deities of the Vedic pantheon, Agni, Indra and Soma, become marginal figures, rarely visible in textual or visual representations. And while we can catch a glimpse of Vishnu, Shiva and the goddess in Vedic mantras, these have little in common with the elaborate Puranic mythologies. However, in spite of these obvious discrepancies, the Vedas continued to be revered as authoritative.

Not surprisingly, there were sometimes conflicts as well – those who valued the Vedic tradition often condemned practices that went beyond the closely regulated contact with the divine through the performance of sacrifices or precisely chanted mantras. On the other hand those engaged in Tantric practices frequently ignored the authority of the Vedas. Also, devotees often tended to project their chosen deity, either Vishnu or Shiva, as supreme. Relations with other traditions, such as Buddhism or Jainism, were also often fraught with tension if not open conflict.

The traditions of devotion or bhakti need to be located within this context. Devotional worship had a long history of almost a thousand years before the period we are considering. During this time, expressions of devotion ranged from the routine worship of deities within temples to ecstatic adoration where devotees attained a trance-like state. The singing and chanting of devotional compositions was often a part of such modes of worship. This was particularly true of the Vaishnava and Shaiva sects.

➲ Discuss...

Find out about gods and goddesses worshipped in your town or village, noting their names and the ways in which they are depicted. Describe the rituals that are performed.

2. POEMS OF PRAYER

EARLY TRADITIONS OF BHAKTI

In the course of the evolution of these forms of worship, in many instances, poet-saints emerged as leaders around whom there developed a community of devotees. Further, while Brahmanas remained important intermediaries between gods and devotees in several forms of bhakti, these traditions also accommodated and acknowledged women and the "lower castes", categories considered ineligible for liberation within the orthodox Brahmanical framework. What also characterised traditions of bhakti was a remarkable diversity.

At a different level, historians of religion often classify bhakti traditions into two broad categories: *saguna* (with attributes) and *nirguna* (without attributes). The former included traditions that focused on the worship of specific deities such as Shiva, Vishnu and his avatars (incarnations) and forms of the goddess or Devi, all often conceptualised in anthropomorphic forms. *Nirguna* bhakti on the other hand was worship of an abstract form of god.

2.1 The Alvars and Nayanars of Tamil Nadu

Some of the earliest bhakti movements (*c.* sixth century) were led by the Alvars (literally, those who are "immersed" in devotion to Vishnu) and Nayanars (literally, leaders who were devotees of Shiva). They travelled from place to place singing hymns in Tamil in praise of their gods.

During their travels the Alvars and Nayanars identified certain shrines as abodes of their chosen deities. Very often large temples were later built at these sacred places. These developed as centres of pilgrimage. Singing compositions of these poet-saints became part of temple rituals in these shrines, as did worship of the saints' images.

2.2 Attitudes towards caste

Some historians suggest that the Alvars and Nayanars initiated a movement of protest against the caste system and the dominance of Brahmanas or at least attempted to reform the system. To some extent this is corroborated by the fact that bhaktas hailed from diverse social backgrounds ranging from Brahmanas to artisans and cultivators and even from castes considered "untouchable".

The importance of the traditions of the Alvars and Nayanars was sometimes indicated by the claim that their compositions were as important as the Vedas. For instance, one of the major anthologies of compositions by the Alvars, the *Nalayira Divyaprabandham*, was frequently described as the Tamil Veda, thus claiming that the text was as significant as the four Vedas in Sanskrit that were cherished by the Brahmanas.

2.3 Women devotees

Perhaps one of the most striking features of these traditions was the presence of women. For instance, the compositions of Andal, a woman Alvar, were widely sung (and continue to be sung to date). Andal saw herself as the beloved of Vishnu; her verses express her love for the deity. Another woman, Karaikkal Ammaiyar, a devotee of Shiva, adopted the path of extreme asceticism in order to attain

Source 1

The *chaturvedin* (Brahmana versed in the four Vedas) and the "outcaste"

This is an excerpt from a composition of an Alvar named Tondaradippodi, who was a Brahmana:

> You (Vishnu) manifestly like
>
> those "servants" who express their love for your feet,
>
> though they may be born outcastes, more than
>
> the *Chaturvedins* who are strangers and without allegiance to your service.

➲ Do you think Tondaradippodi was opposed to the caste system?

Source 2

Shastras or devotion?

This is a verse composed by Appar, a Nayanar saint:

> O rogues who quote the law books,
>
> Of what use are your *gotra* and *kula*?
>
> Just bow to Marperu's lord (Shiva who resides in Marperu, in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu) as your sole refuge.

➲ Are there any similarities or differences in the attitudes of Tondaradippodi and Appar towards Brahmanas?

Compilations of devotional literature

By the tenth century the compositions of the 12 Alvars were compiled in an anthology known as the *Nalayira Divyaprabandham* ("Four Thousand Sacred Compositions").

The poems of Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar form the *Tevaram*, a collection that was compiled and classified in the tenth century on the basis of the music of the songs.

her goal. Her compositions were preserved within the Nayanar tradition. These women renounced their social obligations, but did not join an alternative order or become nuns. Their very existence and their compositions posed a challenge to patriarchal norms.

Source 3

A demon?

This is an excerpt from a poem by Karaikkal Ammaiyar in which she describes herself:

> The female *Pey* (demoness)
> with . . . bulging veins,
> protruding eyes, white teeth and shrunken stomach,
> red haired and jutting teeth
> lengthy shins extending till the ankles,
> shouts and wails
> while wandering in the forest.
> This is the forest of Alankatu,
> which is the home of our father (Shiva)
> who dances … with his matted hair
> thrown in all eight directions, and with cool limbs.

➲ List the ways in which Karaikkal Ammaiyar depicts herself as presenting a contrast to traditional notions of feminine beauty.

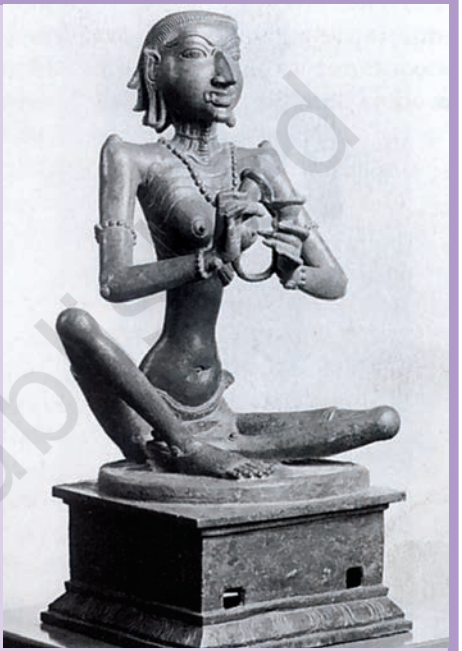


Fig. 6.4
A twelfth-century bronze image of Karaikkal Ammaiyar

2.4 Relations with the state

We saw in Chapter 2 that there were several important chiefdoms in the Tamil region in the early first millennium CE. From the second half of the first millennium there is evidence for states, including those of the Pallavas and Pandyas (*c.* sixth to ninth centuries CE). While Buddhism and Jainism had been prevalent in this region for several centuries, drawing support from merchant and artisan communities, these religious traditions received occasional royal patronage.

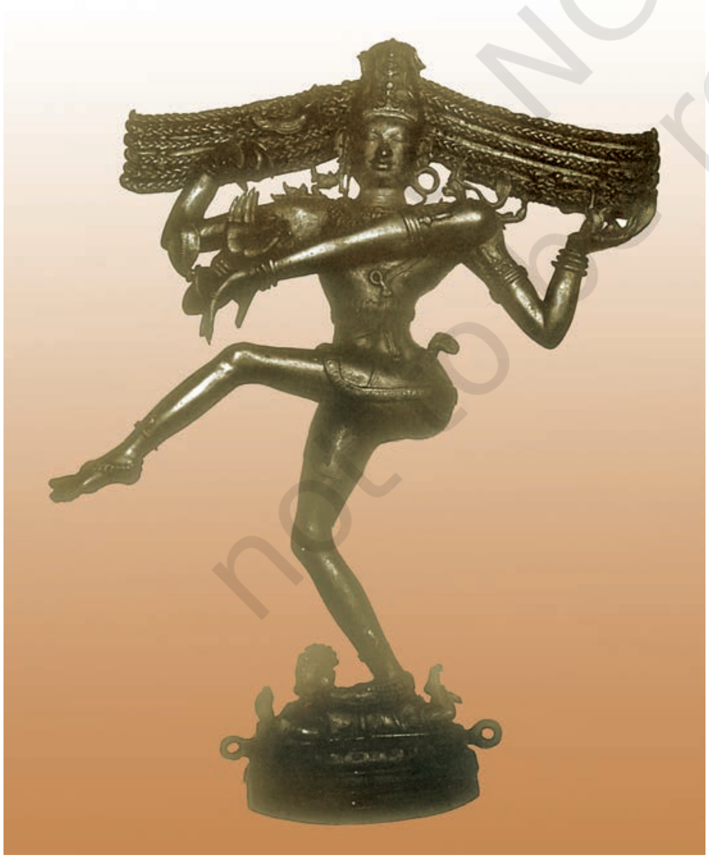
Interestingly, one of the major themes in Tamil bhakti hymns is the poets' opposition to Buddhism and Jainism. This is particularly marked in the compositions of the Nayanars. Historians have attempted to explain this hostility by suggesting that it was due to competition between members of other religious traditions for royal patronage. What is evident is that the powerful Chola rulers (ninth to thirteenth centuries) supported Brahmanical and bhakti traditions, making land grants and constructing temples for Vishnu and Shiva.

In fact, some of the most magnificent Shiva temples, including those at Chidambaram, Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram, were constructed under the patronage of Chola rulers. This was also the period when some of the most spectacular representations of Shiva in bronze sculpture were produced. Clearly, the visions of the Nayanars inspired artists.

Both Nayanars and Alvars were revered by the Vellala peasants. Not surprisingly, rulers tried to win their support as well. The Chola kings, for instance, often attempted to claim divine support and proclaim their own power and status by building splendid temples that were adorned with stone and metal sculpture to recreate the visions of these popular saints who sang in the language of the people.

These kings also introduced the singing of Tamil Shaiva hymns in the temples under royal patronage, taking the initiative to collect and organise them into a text (*Tevaram*). Further, inscriptional evidence from around 945 suggests that the Chola ruler Parantaka I had consecrated metal images of Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar in a Shiva temple. These were carried in processions during the festivals of these saints.

Fig. 6.5
An image of Shiva as Nataraja



➲ Discuss...

Why do you think kings were interested in proclaiming their connections with bhaktas?

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3. THE VIRASHAIVA TRADITION IN KARNATAKA

The twelfth century witnessed the emergence of a new movement in Karnataka, led by a Brahmana named Basavanna (1106-68) who was a minister in the court of a Kalachuri ruler. His followers were known as Virashaivas (heroes of Shiva) or Lingayats (wearers of the *linga*).

Lingayats continue to be an important community in the region to date. They worship Shiva in his manifestation as a *linga*, and men usually wear a small *linga* in a silver case on a loop strung over the left shoulder. Those who are revered include the *jangama* or wandering monks. Lingayats believe that on death the devotee will be united with Shiva and will not return to this world. Therefore they do not practise funerary rites such as cremation, prescribed in the Dharmashastras. Instead, they ceremonially bury their dead.

The Lingayats challenged the idea of caste and the "pollution" attributed to certain groups by Brahmanas. They also questioned the theory of rebirth. These won them followers amongst those who were marginalised within the Brahmanical social order. The Lingayats also encouraged certain practices disapproved in the Dharmashastras, such as post-puberty marriage and the remarriage of widows. Our understanding of the Virashaiva tradition is derived from *vachanas* (literally, sayings) composed in Kannada by women and men who joined the movement.

Source 4

Rituals and the real world

Here is a *vachana* composed by Basavanna:

> When they see a serpent carved in stone they pour milk on it.
>
> If a real serpent comes they say: "Kill. Kill."
>
> To the servant of the god who could eat if served they say: "Go away! Go away!"
>
> But to the image of the god which cannot eat they offer dishes of food.

➲ Describe Basavanna's attitude towards rituals. How does he attempt to convince the listener?

New religious developments

This period also witnessed two major developments. On the one hand, many ideas of the Tamil bhaktas (especially the Vaishnavas) were incorporated within the Sanskritic tradition, culminating in the composition of one of the best-known Puranas, the *Bhagavata Purana*. Second, we find the development of traditions of bhakti in Maharashtra in the thirteenth century.

4. RELIGIOUS FERMENT IN NORTH INDIA

During the same period, in north India deities such as Vishnu and Shiva were worshipped in temples, often built with the support of rulers. However, historians have not found evidence of anything resembling the compositions of the Alvars and Nayanars till the fourteenth century. How do we account for this difference?

Some historians point out that in north India this was the period when several Rajput states emerged. In most of these states Brahmanas occupied positions of importance, performing a range of secular and ritual functions. There seems to have been little or no attempt to challenge their position directly.

At the same time other religious leaders, who did not function within the orthodox Brahmanical framework, were gaining ground. These included the Naths, Jogis and Siddhas. Many of them came from artisanal groups, including weavers, who were becoming increasingly important with the development of organised craft production. Demand for such production grew with the emergence of new urban centres, and long-distance trade with Central Asia and West Asia.

Many of these new religious leaders questioned the authority of the Vedas, and expressed themselves in languages spoken by ordinary people, which developed over centuries into the ones used today. However, in spite of their popularity these religious leaders were not in a position to win the support of the ruling elites.

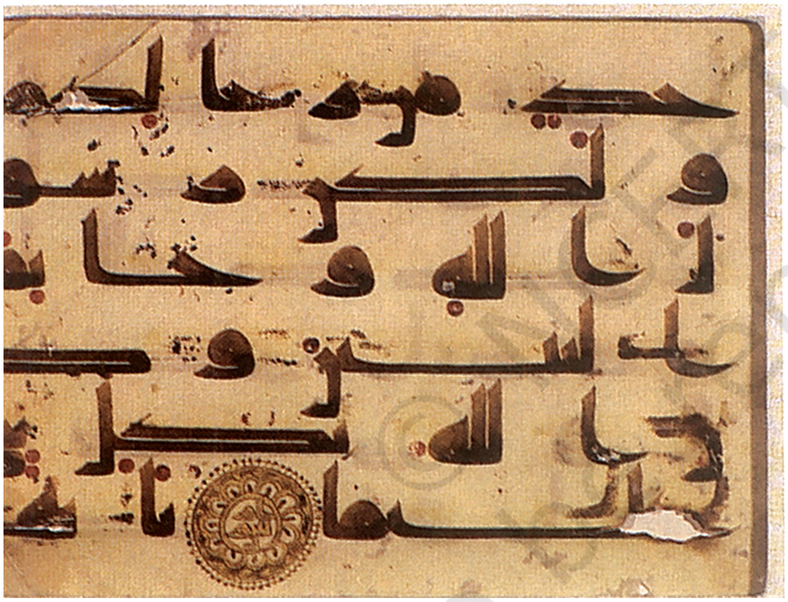

Fig. 6.6
Fragment of a page from the Qur'an, belonging to a manuscript dating to the eighth or ninth century

A new element in this situation was the coming of the Turks which culminated in the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate (thirteenth century). This undermined the power of many of the Rajput states and the Brahmanas who were associated with these kingdoms. This was accompanied by marked changes in the realm of culture and religion. The coming of the sufis (Section 6) was a significant part of these developments.

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5. NEW STRANDS IN THE FABRIC

ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

Just as the regions within the subcontinent were not isolated from one another, so too, contact with lands beyond the seas and mountains had existed for millennia. Arab merchants, for instance, frequented ports along the western coast in the first millennium CE, while Central Asian people settled in the north-western parts of the subcontinent during the same period. From the seventh century, with the advent of Islam, these regions became part of what is often termed the Islamic world.

5.1 Faiths of rulers and subjects

One axis of understanding the significance of these connections that is frequently adopted is to focus on the religions of ruling elites. In 711 an Arab general named Muhammad Qasim conquered Sind, which became part of the Caliph's domain. Later (*c.* thirteenth century) the Turks and Afghans established the Delhi Sultanate. This was followed by the formation of Sultanates in the Deccan and other parts of the subcontinent; Islam was an acknowledged religion of rulers in several areas. This continued with the establishment of the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth century as well as in many of the regional states that emerged in the eighteenth century.

Ulama (plural of *alim*, or one who knows) are scholars of Islamic studies. As preservers of this tradition they perform various religious, juridical and teaching functions.

Theoretically, Muslim rulers were to be guided by the *ulama*, who were expected to ensure that they ruled according to the *shari'a*. Clearly, the situation was complicated in the subcontinent, where there were populations that did not subscribe to Islam.

It is in this context that the category of the *zimmi*, meaning protected (derived from the Arabic word *zimma*, protection) developed for people who followed revealed scriptures, such as the Jews and Christians, and lived under Muslim rulership. They paid a tax called *jizya* and gained the right to be protected by Muslims. In India this status was extended to Hindus as well. As you will see (Chapter 9), rulers such as the Mughals came to regard themselves as emperors of not just Muslims but of all peoples.

In effect, rulers often adopted a fairly flexible policy towards their subjects. For instance, several rulers gave land endowments and granted tax exemptions to Hindu, Jaina, Zoroastrian, Christian and Jewish religious institutions and also expressed respect and

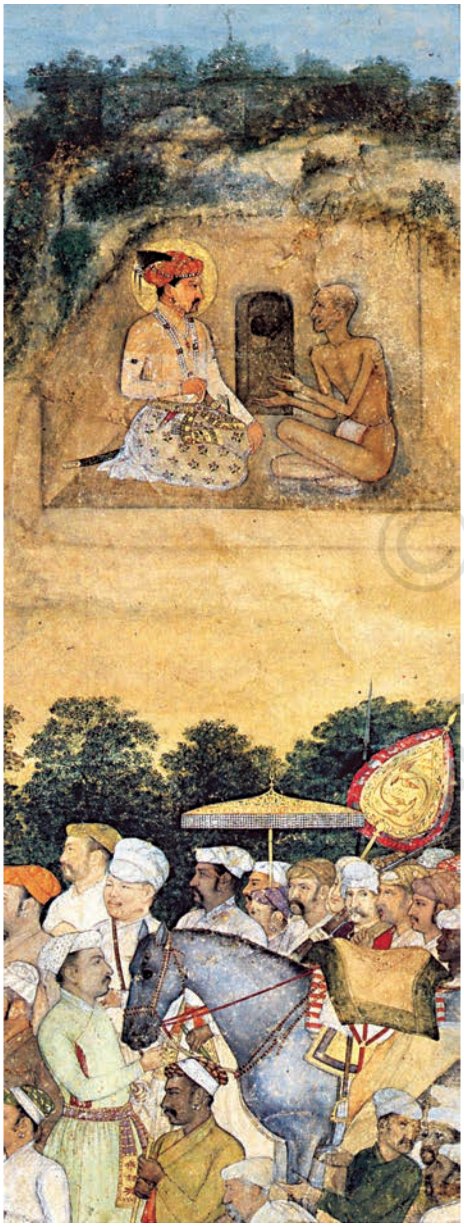
Shari'a

The *shari'a* is the law governing the Muslim community. It is based on the Qur'an and the *hadis*, traditions of the Prophet including a record of his remembered words and deeds.

With the expansion of Islamic rule outside Arabia, in areas where customs and traditions were different, *qiyas* (reasoning by analogy) and *ijma* (consensus of the community) were recognised as two other sources of legislation. Thus, the *shari'a* evolved from the Qur'an, *hadis*, *qiyas* and *ijma*.

devotion towards non-Muslim religious leaders. These grants were made by several Mughal rulers, including Akbar and Aurangzeb.

Fig. 6.7
A Mughal painting depicting Emperor Jahangir with a Jogi



Source 5

A church in Khambat

This is an excerpt from a *farman* (imperial order) issued by Akbar in 1598:

> Whereas it reached our eminent and holy notice that the *padris* (fathers) of the Holy Society of Jesus wish to build a house of prayer (church) in the city of Kambayat (Khambat, in Gujarat); therefore an exalted mandate … is being issued, … that the dignitaries of the city of Kambayat should in no case stand in their way but should allow them to build a church so that they may engage themselves in their own worship. It is necessary that the order of the Emperor should be obeyed in every way.

➲ Who were the people from whom Akbar anticipated opposition to his order?

Source 6

Reverence for the Jogi

Here is an excerpt from a letter written by Aurangzeb to a Jogi in 1661-62:

> The possessor of the sublime station, Shiv Murat, Guru Anand Nath Jio!
>
> May your Reverence remain in peace and happiness ever under the protection of Sri Shiv Jio!
>
> … A piece of cloth for the cloak and a sum of twenty five rupees which have been sent as an offering will reach (Your Reverence) … Your Reverence may write to us whenever there is any service which can be rendered by us.

➲ Identify the deity worshipped by the Jogi. Describe the attitude of the emperor towards the Jogi.

5.2 The popular practice of Islam

The developments that followed the coming of Islam were not confined to ruling elites; in fact they permeated far and wide, through the subcontinent, amongst different social strata – peasants, artisans, warriors, merchants, to name a few. All those who adopted Islam accepted, in principle, the five "pillars" of the faith: that there is one God, Allah, and Prophet Muhammad is his messenger (*shahada*); offering prayers five times a day (*namaz/salat*); giving alms (*zakat*); fasting during the month of Ramzan (*sawm*); and performing the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*).

However, these universal features were often overlaid with diversities in practice derived from sectarian affiliations (Sunni, Shi'a), and the influence of local customary practices of converts from different social milieus. For example, the Khojahs, a branch of the Ismailis (a Shi'a sect), developed new modes of communication, disseminating ideas derived from the Qur'an through indigenous literary genres. These included the *ginan* (derived from the Sanskrit *jnana*, meaning "knowledge"), devotional poems in Punjabi, Multani, Sindhi, Kachchi, Hindi and Gujarati, sung in special *ragas* during daily prayer meetings.

Elsewhere, Arab Muslim traders who settled along the Malabar coast (Kerala) adopted the local language, Malayalam. They also adopted local customs such as matriliny (Chapter 3) and matrilocal residence.

The complex blend of a universal faith with local traditions is perhaps best exemplified in the architecture of mosques. Some architectural features

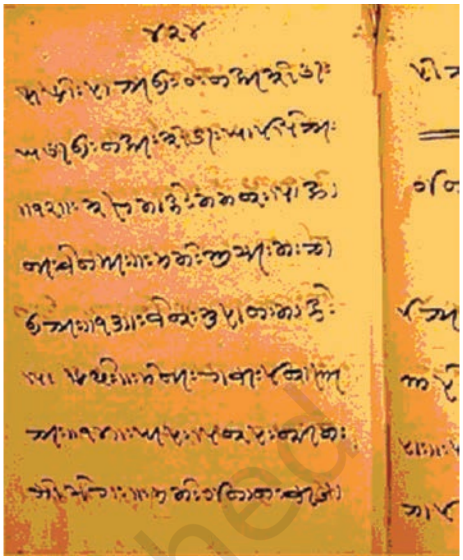


Fig. 6.8
A Khojaki manuscript
The *ginan* were transmitted orally before being recorded in the Khojaki script that was derived from the local *landa* ("clipped" mercantile script) used by the linguistically diverse community of Khojahs in the Punjab, Sind and Gujarat.

Matrilocal residence is a practice where women after marriage remain in their natal home with their children and the husbands may come to stay with them.

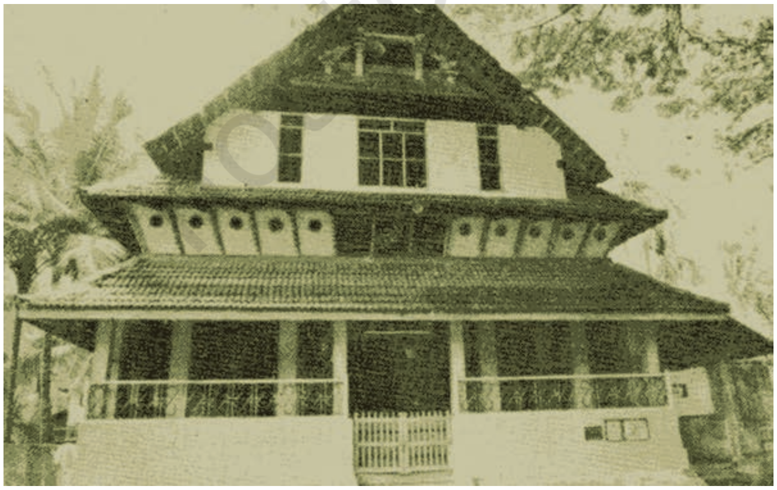


Fig. 6.9
A mosque in Kerala,
c. *thirteenth century*
Note the *shikhara*-like roof.

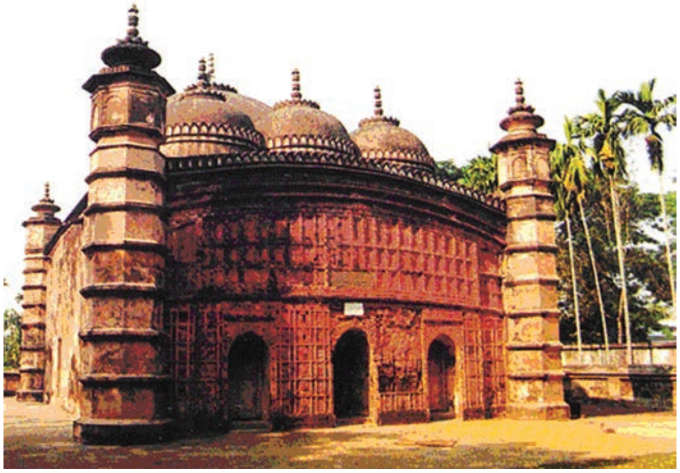


Fig. 6.10
Atiya mosque, Mymensingh district, Bangladesh, built with brick, 1609

of mosques are universal – such as their orientation towards Mecca, evident in the placement of the *mihrab* (prayer niche) and the *minbar* (pulpit). However, there are several features that show variations – such as roofs and building materials (see Figs. 6.9, 6.10 and 6.11).

5.3 Names for communities

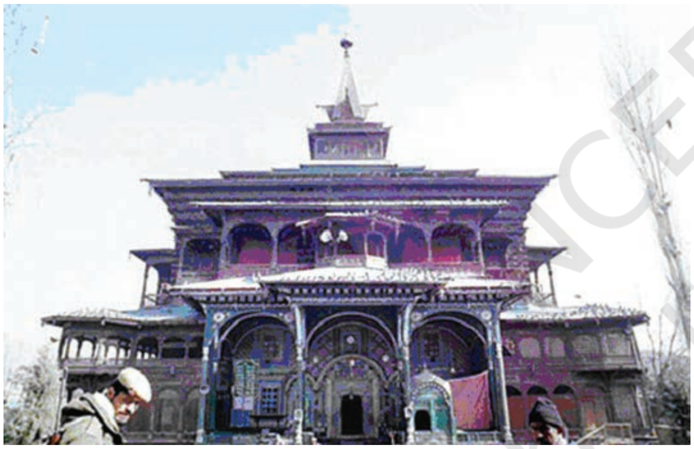


Fig. 6.11
The Shah Hamadan mosque in Srinagar, on the banks of the Jhelum, is often regarded as the "jewel in the crown" of all the existing mosques of Kashmir.
Built in 1395, it is one of the best examples of Kashmiri wooden architecture. Notice the spire and the beautifully carved eaves. It is decorated with papier mache.

We often take the terms Hindu and Muslim for granted, as labels for religious communities. Yet, these terms did not gain currency for a very long time. Historians who have studied Sanskrit texts and inscriptions dating between the eighth and fourteenth centuries point out that the term *musalman* or Muslim was virtually never used. Instead, people were occasionally identified in terms of the region from which they came. So, the Turkish rulers were designated as Turushka, Tajika were people from Tajikistan and Parashika were people from Persia. Sometimes, terms used for other peoples were applied to the new migrants. For instance, the Turks and Afghans were referred to as Shakas (Chapters 2 and 3) and Yavanas (a term used for Greeks).

A more general term for these migrant communities was *mlechchha*, indicating that they did not observe the norms of caste society and spoke languages that were not derived from Sanskrit. Such terms sometimes had a derogatory connotation, but they rarely denoted a distinct religious community of Muslims in opposition to Hindus. And as we saw (Chapter 5), the term "Hindu" was used in a variety of ways, not necessarily restricted to a religious connotation.

➲ Discuss...

Find out more about the architecture of mosques in your village or town. What are the materials used to build mosques? Are these locally available? Are there any distinctive architectural features?

6. THE GROWTH OF SUFISM

In the early centuries of Islam a group of religious-minded people called sufis turned to asceticism and mysticism in protest against the growing materialism of the Caliphate as a religious and political institution. They were critical of the dogmatic definitions and scholastic methods of interpreting the Qur'an and *sunna* (traditions of the Prophet) adopted by theologians. Instead, they laid emphasis on seeking salvation through intense devotion and love for God by following His commands, and by following the example of the Prophet Muhammad whom they regarded as a perfect human being. The sufis thus sought an interpretation of the Qur'an on the basis of their personal experience.

6.1 *Khanqahs* and *silsilas*

By the eleventh century Sufism evolved into a well-developed movement with a body of literature on Quranic studies and sufi practices. Institutionally, the sufis began to organise communities around the hospice or *khanqah* (Persian) controlled by a teaching master known as *shaikh* (in Arabic), *pir* or *murshid* (in Persian). He enrolled disciples (*murids*) and appointed a successor (*khalifa*). He established rules for spiritual conduct and interaction between inmates as well as between laypersons and the master.

Sufi *silsilas* began to crystallise in different parts of the Islamic world around the twelfth century. The word *silsila* literally means a chain, signifying a continuous link between master and disciple, stretching as an unbroken spiritual genealogy to the Prophet Muhammad. It was through this channel that spiritual power and blessings were transmitted to devotees. Special rituals of initiation were developed in which initiates took an oath of allegiance, wore a patched garment, and shaved their hair.

When the *shaikh* died, his tomb-shrine (*dargah*, a Persian term meaning court) became the centre of devotion for his followers. This encouraged the practice of pilgrimage or *ziyarat* to his grave, particularly on his death anniversary or *urs* (or marriage, signifying the union of his soul with God). This was because people believed that in death saints were united with God, and were thus closer to Him than when living. People sought their blessings to attain material and spiritual benefits. Thus evolved the cult of the *shaikh* revered as *wali*.

Sufism and *tasawwuf*

Sufism is an English word coined in the nineteenth century. The word used for Sufism in Islamic texts is *tasawwuf*. Historians have understood this term in several ways. According to some scholars, it is derived from *suf*, meaning wool, referring to the coarse woollen clothes worn by sufis. Others derive it from *safa*, meaning purity. It may also have been derived from *suffa*, the platform outside the Prophet's mosque, where a group of close followers assembled to learn about the faith.

Names of *silsilas*

Most sufi lineages were named after a founding figure. For example, the Qadiri order was named after Shaikh Abd'ul Qadir Jilani. However, some like the Chishti order, were named after their place of origin, in this case the town of Chisht in central Afghanistan.

Wali (plural *auliya*) or friend of God was a sufi who claimed proximity to Allah, acquiring His Grace (*barakat*) to perform miracles (*karamat*).

6.2 Outside the *khanqah*

Some mystics initiated movements based on a radical interpretation of sufi ideals. Many scorned the *khanqah* and took to mendicancy and observed celibacy. They ignored rituals and observed extreme forms of asceticism. They were known by different names – Qalandars, Madaris, Malangs, Haidaris, etc. Because of their deliberate defiance of the *shari'a* they were often referred to as *be-shari'a*, in contrast to the *ba-shari'a* sufis who complied with it.

➲ Discuss...

Are there any *khanqahs* or *dargahs* in your town or village? Find out when these were built, and what are the activities associated with them. Are there other places where religious men and women meet or live?

7. THE CHISHTIS IN THE SUBCONTINENT

Of the groups of sufis who migrated to India in the late twelfth century, the Chishtis were the most influential. This was because they adapted successfully to the local environment and adopted several features of Indian devotional traditions.

7.1 Life in the Chishti *khanqah*

The *khanqah* was the centre of social life. We know about Shaikh Nizamuddin's hospice (*c.* fourteenth century) on the banks of the river Yamuna in Ghiyaspur, on the outskirts of what was then the city of Delhi. It comprised several small rooms and a big hall (*jama'at khana*) where the inmates and visitors lived and prayed. The inmates included family members of the Shaikh, his attendants and disciples. The Shaikh lived in a small room on the roof of the hall where he met visitors in the morning and evening. A veranda surrounded the courtyard, and a boundary wall ran around the complex. On one occasion, fearing a Mongol invasion, people from the neighbouring areas flocked into the *khanqah* to seek refuge.

MAJOR TEACHERS OF THE CHISHTI *SILSILA*

SUFI TEACHERS	YEAR OF DEATH	LOCATION OF *DARGAH*
Shaikh Muinuddin Sijzi	1235	Ajmer (Rajasthan)
Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki	1235	Delhi
Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-i Shakar	1265	Ajodhan (Pakistan)
Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya	1325	Delhi
Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh-i Dehli	1356	Delhi

There was an open kitchen (*langar*), run on *futuh* (unasked-for charity). From morning till late night people from all walks of life – soldiers, slaves, singers, merchants, poets, travellers, rich and poor, Hindu *jogis* (yogi) and *qalandars* – came seeking discipleship, amulets for healing, and the intercession of the Shaikh in various matters. Other visitors included poets such as Amir Hasan Sijzi and Amir Khusrau and the court historian Ziyauddin Barani, all of whom wrote about the Shaikh. Practices that were adopted, including bowing before the Shaikh, offering water to visitors, shaving the heads of initiates, and yogic exercises, represented attempts to assimilate local traditions.

Shaikh Nizamuddin appointed several spiritual successors and deputed them to set up hospices in various parts of the subcontinent. As a result the teachings, practices and organisation of the Chishtis as well as the fame of the Shaikh spread rapidly. This in turn drew pilgrims to his shrine, and also to the shrines of his spiritual ancestors.

7.2 Chishti devotionalism: *ziyarat* and *qawwali*

Pilgrimage, called *ziyarat*, to tombs of sufi saints is prevalent all over the Muslim world. This practice is an occasion for seeking the sufi's spiritual grace (*barakat*). For more than seven centuries people of various creeds, classes and social backgrounds have expressed their devotion at the *dargahs* of the five great Chishti saints (see chart on p.154). Amongst these, the most revered shrine is that of Khwaja Muinuddin, popularly known as "Gharib Nawaz" (comforter of the poor).

The earliest textual references to Khwaja Muinuddin's *dargah* date to the fourteenth century. It was evidently popular because of the austerity and piety of its Shaikh, the greatness of his spiritual successors, and the patronage of royal visitors. Muhammad bin Tughlaq (ruled, 1324-51) was the

The story of Data Ganj Bakhsh

In 1039 Abu'l Hasan al Hujwiri, a native of Hujwir near Ghazni in Afghanistan, was forced to cross the Indus as a captive of the invading Turkish army. He settled in Lahore and wrote a book in Persian called the *Kashf-ul-Mahjub* (Unveiling of the Veiled) to explain the meaning of *tasawwuf*, and those who practised it, that is, the sufi.

Hujwiri died in 1073 and was buried in Lahore. The grandson of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni constructed a tomb over his grave, and this tomb-shrine became a site of pilgrimage for his devotees, especially on his death anniversary.

Even today Hujwiri is revered as Data Ganj Bakhsh or "Giver who bestows treasures" and his mausoleum is called Data Darbar or "Court of the Giver".

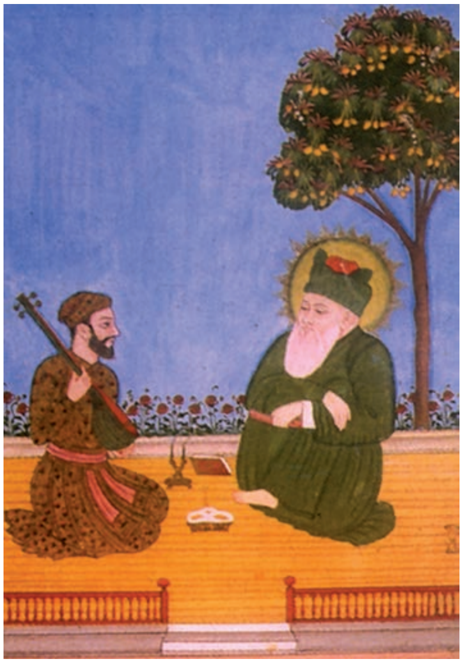


Fig. 6.12
A seventeenth-century painting of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya and his disciple Amir Khusrau

➲ Describe how the artist differentiates between the Shaikh and his disciple.

first Sultan to visit the shrine, but the earliest construction to house the tomb was funded in the late fifteenth century by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Khalji of Malwa. Since the shrine was located on the trade route linking Delhi and Gujarat, it attracted a lot of travellers.

By the sixteenth century the shrine had become very popular; in fact it was the spirited singing of pilgrims bound for Ajmer that inspired Akbar to visit the tomb. He went there fourteen times, sometimes two or three times a year, to seek blessings for new conquests, fulfilment of vows, and the birth of sons. He maintained this tradition until 1580. Each of these visits was celebrated by generous gifts, which were recorded in imperial documents. For example, in 1568 he offered a huge cauldron (*degh*) to facilitate cooking for pilgrims. He also had a mosque constructed within the compound of the *dargah*.

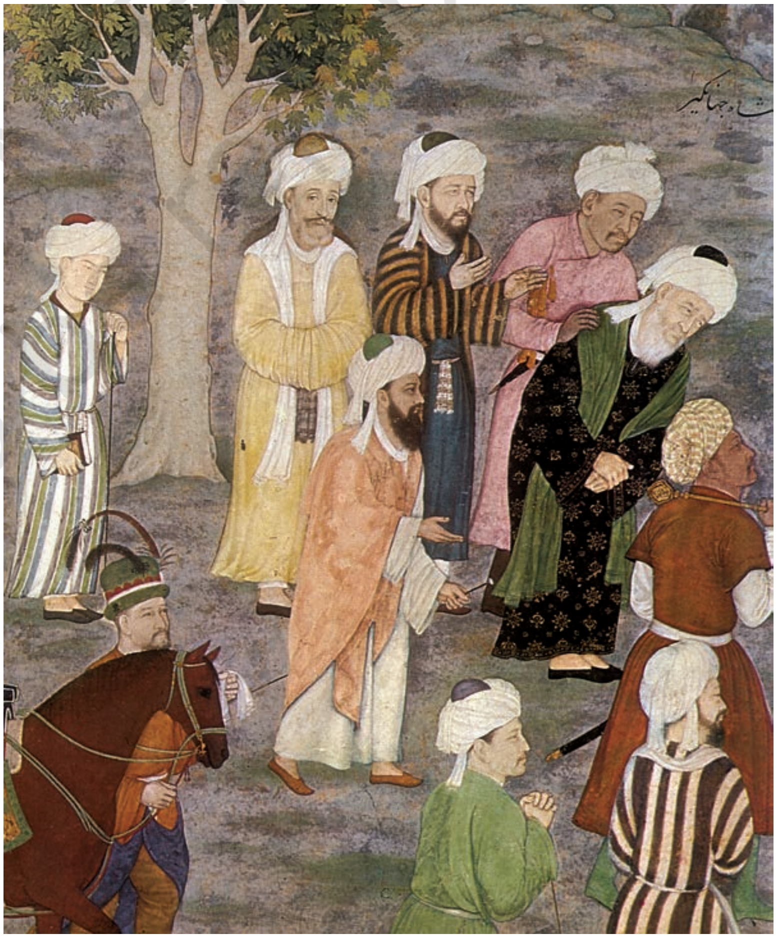


Fig. 6.13
Shaikhs greeting the Mughal emperor Jahangir on his pilgrimage to Ajmer, painting by an artist named Manohar, c. *1615*

➲ Find his signature on the painting.

Source 7

The pilgrimage of the Mughal princess Jahanara, 1643

The following is an excerpt from Jahanara's biography of Shaikh Muinuddin Chishti, titled *Munis al Arwah* (The Confidant of Spirits):

> After praising the one God … this lowly *faqira* (humble soul) Jahanara … went from the capital Agra in the company of my great father (Emperor Shah Jahan) towards the pure region of incomparable Ajmer … I was committed to this idea, that every day in every station I would perform two cycles of optional prayer …
>
> For several days … I did not sleep on a leopard skin at night, I did not extend my feet in the direction of the blessed sanctuary of the revered saving master, and I did not turn my back towards him. I passed the days beneath the trees.
>
> On Thursday, the fourth of the blessed month of Ramzan, I attained the happiness of pilgrimage to the illuminated and the perfumed tomb … With an hour of daylight remaining, I went to the holy sanctuary and rubbed my pale face with the dust of that threshold. From the doorway to the blessed tomb I went barefoot, kissing the ground. Having entered the dome, I went around the light-filled tomb of my master seven times … Finally, with my own hand I put the finest quality of *itar* on the perfumed tomb of the revered one, and having taken off the rose scarf that I had on my head, I placed it on the top of the blessed tomb …

➲ What are the gestures that Jahanara records to indicate her devotion to the Shaikh? How does she suggest that the *dargah* was a special place?

Also part of *ziyarat* is the use of music and dance including mystical chants performed by specially trained musicians or *qawwals* to evoke divine ecstasy. The sufis remember God either by reciting the *zikr* (the Divine Names) or evoking His Presence through *sama*' (literally, "audition") or performance of mystical music. *Sama*' was integral to the Chishtis, and exemplified interaction with indigenous devotional traditions.

The lamp of the entire land

Each sufi shrine was associated with distinctive features. This is what an eighteenth-century visitor from the Deccan, Dargah Quli Khan, wrote about the shrine of Nasiruddin Chiragh-i Dehli in his *Muraqqa-i Dehli* (Album of Delhi):

> The Shaikh (in the grave) is not the lamp of Delhi but of the entire country. People turn up there in crowds, particularly on Sunday. In the month of Diwali the entire population of Delhi visits it and stays in tents around the spring tank for days. They take baths to obtain cures from chronic diseases. Muslims and Hindus pay visits in the same spirit. From morning till evening people come and also make themselves busy in merrymaking in the shade of the trees.

Amir Khusrau and the *qaul*

Amir Khusrau (1253-1325), the great poet, musician and disciple of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, gave a unique form to the Chishti *sama*‘ by introducing the *qaul* (Arabic word meaning “saying”), a hymn sung at the opening or closing of *qawwali*. This was followed by sufi poetry in Persian, Hindavi or Urdu, and sometimes using words from all of these languages. *Qawwals* (those who sing these songs) at the shrine of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya always start their recital with the *qaul*. Today *qawwali* is performed in shrines all over the subcontinent.

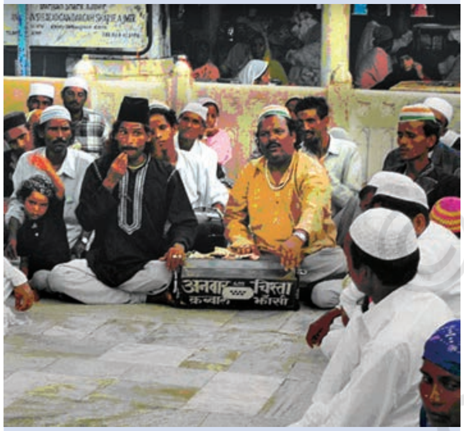


Fig. 6.14
Qawwali *at the* dargah *of Nizamuddin Auliya*

7.3 Languages and communication

It was not just in *sama*‘ that the Chishtis adopted local languages. In Delhi, those associated with the Chishti *silsila* conversed in Hindavi, the language of the people. Other sufis such as Baba Farid composed verses in the local language, which were incorporated in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Yet others composed long poems or *masnavis* to express ideas of divine love using human love as an allegory. For example, the *prem-akhyan* (love story) *Padmavat* composed by Malik Muhammad Jayasi revolved around the romance of Padmini and Ratansen, the king of Chittor. Their trials were symbolic of the soul’s journey to the divine. Such poetic compositions were often recited in hospices, usually during *sama*‘.

A different genre of sufi poetry was composed in and around the town of Bijapur, Karnataka. These were short poems in Dakhani (a variant of Urdu) attributed to Chishti sufis who lived in this region during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These poems were probably sung by women while performing household chores like grinding grain and spinning. Other compositions were in the form of *lurinama* or lullabies and *shadinama* or wedding songs. It is likely that the sufis of this region were inspired by the pre-existing bhakti tradition of the Kannada *vachanas* of the Lingayats and the Marathi *abhangs* of the *sants* of Pandharpur. It is through this medium that Islam gradually gained a place in the villages of the Deccan.

Source 8

Charkhanama

A song set to the rhythm of the spinning wheel:

As you take the cotton, you do *zikr-i jali*
As you separate the cotton you should do *zikr-i qalbi*
And as you spool the thread you should do *zikr-i aini*
Zikr should be uttered from the stomach through the chest,
And threaded through the throat.
The threads of breath should be counted one by one, oh sister.
Up to twenty four thousand.
Do this day and night,
And offer this to your *pir* as a gift.

➲ In what ways are the ideas and modes of expression used in this song similar to or different from those used by Jahanara to describe her *ziyarat* (Source 7)?

7.4 Sufis and the state

A major feature of the Chishti tradition was austerity, including maintaining a distance from worldly power. However, this was by no means a situation of absolute isolation from political power. The sufis accepted unsolicited grants and donations from the political elites. The Sultans in turn set up charitable trusts (*auqaf*) as endowments for hospices and granted tax-free land (*inam*).

The Chishtis accepted donations in cash and kind. Rather than accumulate donations, they preferred to use these fully on immediate requirements such as food, clothes, living quarters and ritual necessities (such as *sama'*). All this enhanced the moral authority of the *shaikhs*, which in turn attracted people from all walks of life. Further, their piety and scholarship, and people's belief in their miraculous powers made sufis popular among the masses, whose support kings wished to secure.

Kings did not simply need to demonstrate their association with sufis; they also required legitimation from them. When the Turks set up the Delhi Sultanate, they resisted the insistence of the *ulama* on imposing *shari'a* as state law because they anticipated opposition from their subjects, the majority of whom were non-Muslims. The Sultans then sought out the sufis – who derived their authority directly from God – and did not depend on jurists to interpret the *shari'a*.

Besides, it was believed that the *auliya* could intercede with God in order to improve the material and spiritual conditions of ordinary human beings. This explains why kings often wanted their tombs to be in the vicinity of sufi shrines and hospices.

However, there were instances of conflict between the Sultans and the sufis. To assert their authority, both expected that certain rituals be performed such as prostration and kissing of the feet. Occasionally the sufi *shaikh* was addressed with high-sounding titles. For example, the disciples of Nizamuddin Auliya addressed him as *sultan-ul-mashaikh* (literally, Sultan amongst *shaikhs*).

Sufis and the state

Other sufis such as the Suhrawardi under the Delhi Sultans and the Naqshbandi under the Mughals were also associated with the state. However, the modes of their association were not the same as those of the Chishtis. In some cases, sufis accepted courtly offices.

➲ Discuss...

What are the potential sources of conflict in the relationship between religious and political leaders?

Source 9

Declining a royal gift

This excerpt from a sufi text describes the proceedings at Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya's hospice in 1313:

> I (the author, Amir Hasan Sijzi) had the good fortune of kissing his (Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya's) feet … At this time a local ruler had sent him the deed of ownership to two gardens and much land, along with the provisions and tools for their maintenance. The ruler had also made it clear that he was relinquishing all his rights to both the gardens and land. The master … had not accepted that gift. Instead, he had lamented: "What have I to do with gardens and fields and lands? … None of … our spiritual masters had engaged in such activity."
>
> Then he told an appropriate story: "… Sultan Ghiyasuddin, who at that time was still known as Ulugh Khan, came to visit Shaikh Fariduddin (and) offered some money and ownership deeds for four villages to the Shaikh, the money being for the benefit of the dervishes (sufis), and the land for his use. Smiling, Shaikh al Islam (Fariduddin) said: 'Give me the money. I will dispense it to the dervishes. But as for those land deeds, keep them. There are many who long for them. Give them away to such persons.'"

➲ What aspects of the relationship between the sufis and the state do you think are best illustrated in this account? What does the account tell us about the modes of communication between the Shaikh and his disciples?

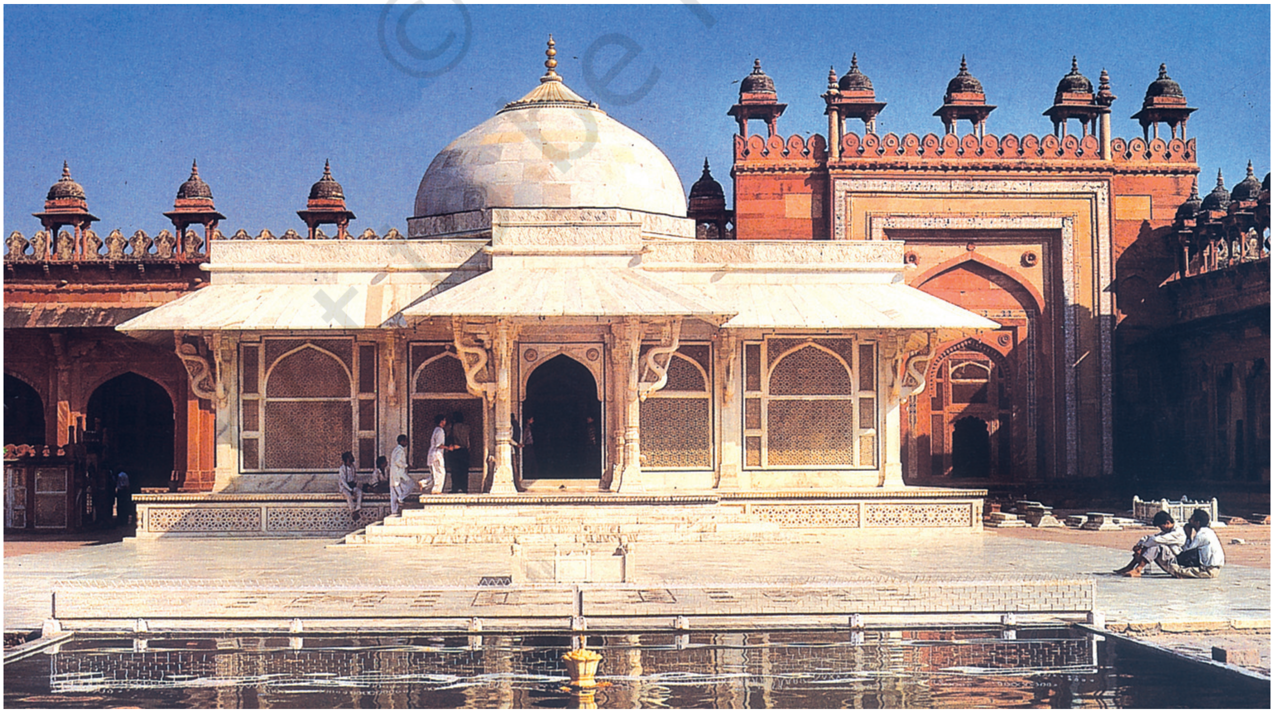


Fig. 6.15
The dargah *of Shaikh Salim Chishti (a direct descendant of Baba Farid) constructed in Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar's capital, symbolised the bond between the Chishtis and the Mughal state.*

8. NEW DEVOTIONAL PATHS DIALOGUE AND DISSENT IN NORTHERN INDIA

Many poet-saints engaged in explicit and implicit dialogue with these new social situations, ideas and institutions. Let us now see how this dialogue found expression. We focus here on three of the most influential figures of the time.

8.1 Weaving a divine fabric: Kabir

Kabir (*c.* fourteenth-fifteenth centuries) is perhaps one of the most outstanding examples of a poet-saint who emerged within this context. Historians have painstakingly tried to reconstruct his life and times through a study of compositions attributed to him as well as later hagiographies. Such exercises have proved to be challenging on a number of counts.

Verses ascribed to Kabir have been compiled in three distinct but overlapping traditions. The *Kabir Bijak* is preserved by the Kabirpanth (the path or sect of Kabir) in Varanasi and elsewhere in Uttar Pradesh; the *Kabir Granthavali* is associated with the Dadupanth in Rajasthan, and many of his compositions are found in the *Adi Granth Sahib* (see Section 8.2). All these manuscript compilations were made long after the death of Kabir. By the nineteenth century, anthologies of verses attributed to him circulated in print in regions as far apart as Bengal, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

Kabir's poems have survived in several languages and dialects; and some are composed in the special language of *nirguna* poets, the *sant bhasha*. Others, known as *ulatbansi* (upside-down sayings), are written in a form in which everyday meanings are inverted. These hint at the difficulties of capturing the nature of the Ultimate Reality in words: expressions such as "the lotus which blooms without flower" or the "fire raging in the ocean" convey a sense of Kabir's mystical experiences.

Also striking is the range of traditions Kabir drew on to describe the Ultimate Reality. These include Islam: he described the Ultimate Reality as Allah, Khuda, Hazrat and Pir. He also used terms drawn from Vedantic traditions, *alakh* (the unseen), *nirakar* (formless), Brahman, Atman, etc. Other terms with mystical connotations such as *shabda* (sound) or *shunya* (emptiness) were drawn from yogic traditions.

Source 10

The One Lord

Here is a composition attributed to Kabir:

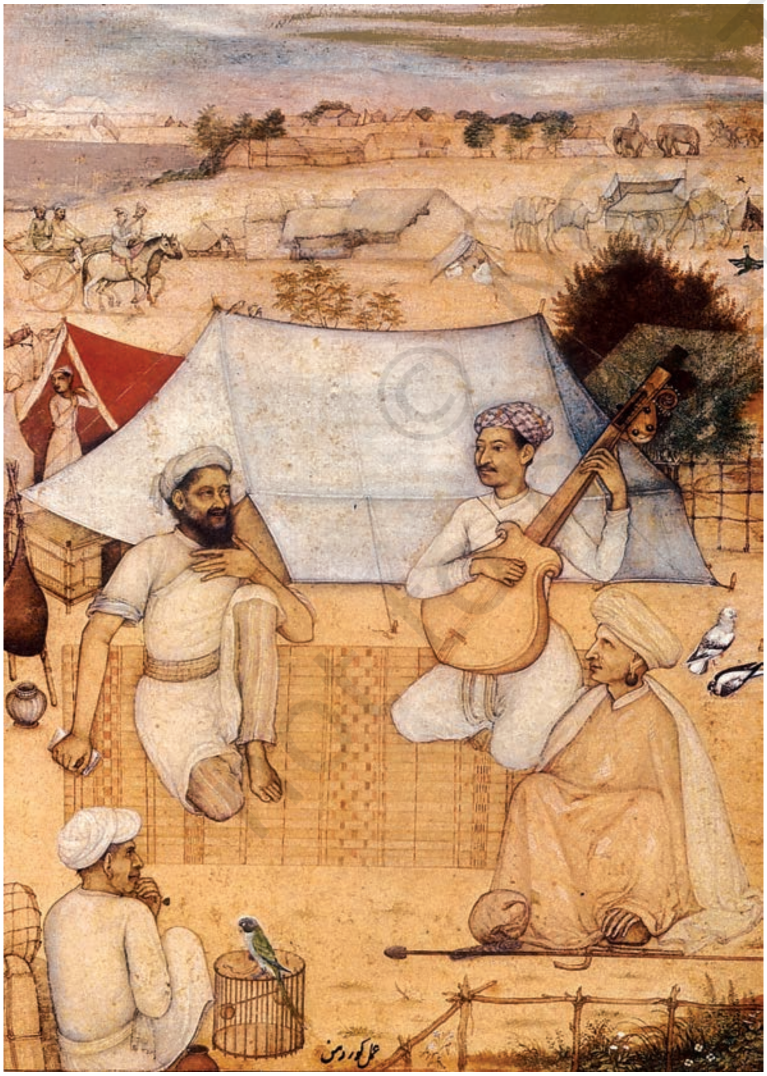
> Tell me, brother, how can there be
>
> No one lord of the world but two?
>
> Who led you so astray?
>
> God is called by many names:
>
> Names like Allah, Ram, Karim, Keshav, Hari, and Hazrat.
>
> Gold may be shaped into rings and bangles.
>
> Isn't it gold all the same?
>
> Distinctions are only words we invent …
>
> Kabir says they are both mistaken.
>
> Neither can find the only Ram. One kills the goat, the other cows.
>
> They waste their lives in disputation.

➲ What is Kabir's argument against the distinction made between gods of different communities?

Diverse and sometimes conflicting ideas are expressed in these poems. Some poems draw on Islamic ideas and use monotheism and iconoclasm to attack Hindu polytheism and idol worship; others use the sufi concept of *zikr* and *ishq* (love) to express the Hindu practice of *nam-simaran* (remembrance of God's name).

Were all these composed by Kabir? We may never be able to tell with certainty, although scholars have tried to analyse the language, style and content to establish which verses could be Kabir's. What this rich corpus of verses also signifies is that Kabir was and is to the present a source of inspiration for those who questioned entrenched religious and social institutions, ideas and practices in their search for the Divine.

Fig. 6.16
Roadside musicians, a seventeenth-century Mughal painting
It is likely that the compositions of the *sants* were sung by such musicians.



Just as Kabir's ideas probably crystallised through dialogue and debate (explicit or implicit) with the traditions of sufis and yogis in the region of Awadh (part of present-day Uttar Pradesh), his legacy was claimed by several groups, who remembered him and continue to do so.

This is most evident in later debates about whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim by birth, debates that are reflected in hagiographies. Many of these were composed from the seventeenth century onwards, about 200 years after Kabir's lifetime.

Hagiographies within the Vaishnava tradition attempted to suggest that he was born a Hindu, Kabirdas (Kabir itself is an Arabic word meaning "great"), but was raised by a poor Muslim family belonging to the community of weavers or *julahas*, who were relatively recent converts to Islam. They also suggested that he was initiated into bhakti by a guru, perhaps Ramananda.

However, the verses attributed to Kabir use the words *guru* and *satguru,* but do not mention the name of any specific preceptor. Historians have pointed out that it is very difficult to establish that Ramananda and Kabir were contemporaries, without assigning improbably long lives to either or both. So, while traditions linking the two cannot be accepted at face value, they show how important the legacy of Kabir was for later generations.

8.2 Baba Guru Nanak and the Sacred Word

Baba Guru Nanak (1469-1539) was born in a Hindu merchant family in a village called Nankana Sahib near the river Ravi in the predominantly Muslim Punjab. He trained to be an accountant and studied Persian. He was married at a young age but he spent most of his time among sufis and bhaktas. He also travelled widely.

The message of Baba Guru Nanak is spelt out in his hymns and teachings. These suggest that he advocated a form of *nirguna* bhakti. He firmly repudiated the external practices of the religions he saw around him. He rejected sacrifices, ritual baths, image worship, austerities and the scriptures of both Hindus and Muslims. For Baba Guru Nanak, the Absolute or "*rab*" had no gender or form. He proposed a simple way to connect to the Divine by remembering and repeating the Divine Name, expressing his ideas through hymns called "*shabad*" in Punjabi, the language of the region. Baba Guru Nanak would sing these compositions in various *ragas* while his attendant Mardana played the *rabab.*

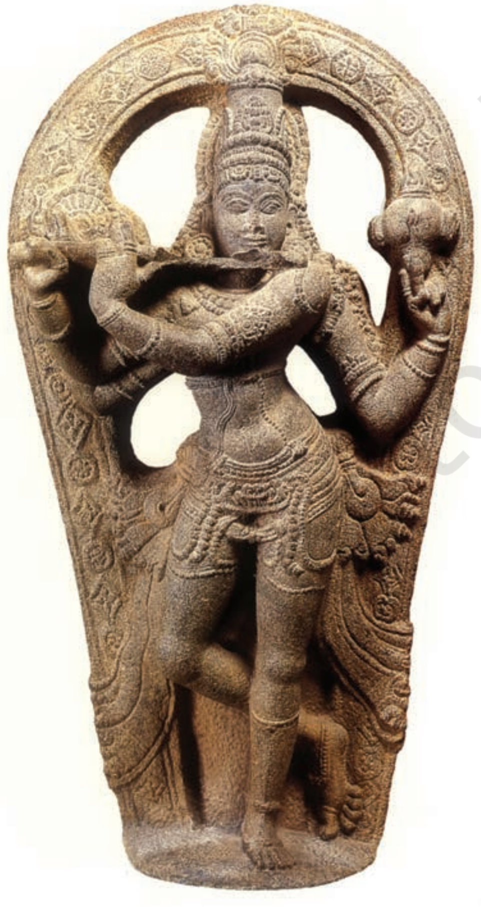
Baba Guru Nanak organised his followers into a community. He set up rules for congregational worship (*sangat*) involving collective recitation. He appointed one of his disciples, Angad, to succeed him as the preceptor (*guru*), and this practice was followed for nearly 200 years.

It appears that Baba Guru Nanak did not wish to establish a new religion, but after his death his followers consolidated their own practices and distinguished themselves from both Hindus and Muslims. The fifth preceptor, Guru Arjan, compiled Baba Guru Nanak's hymns along with those of his four successors and other religious poets like Baba Farid, Ravidas (also known as Raidas) and Kabir in the *Adi Granth Sahib.* These hymns, called *"gurbani",* are composed in various languages. In the late seventeenth century the tenth preceptor, Guru Gobind Singh, included the compositions of the ninth guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and this scripture was called the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Guru Gobind Singh also laid the foundation of the Khalsa Panth (army of the pure) and defined its five symbols: uncut hair, a dagger, a pair of shorts, a comb and a steel bangle. Under him the community got consolidated as a socio-religious and military force.

8.3 Mirabai, the devotee princess

Mirabai (*c.* fifteenth-sixteenth centuries) is perhaps the best-known woman poet within the bhakti tradition. Biographies have been reconstructed primarily from the *bhajans* attributed to her, which were transmitted orally for centuries. According to these, she was a Rajput princess from Merta in Marwar who was married against her wishes to a prince of the Sisodia clan of Mewar, Rajasthan. She defied her husband and did not submit to the traditional role of wife and mother, instead recognising Krishna, the *avatar* of Vishnu, as her lover. Her in-laws tried to poison her, but she escaped from the palace to live as a wandering saint composing songs that are characterised by intense expressions of emotion.

Fig. 6.17
A fifteenth-century stone sculpture (Tamil Nadu) depicting Krishna playing the flute, a form of the deity worshipped by Mirabai



Source 11

Love for the Lord

This is part of a song attributed to Mirabai:

I will build a funeral pyre of sandalwood and aloe;
Light it by your own hand
When I am burned away to cinders;
Smear this ash upon your limbs.
… let flame be lost in flame.

In another verse, she sings:

What can Mewar's ruler do to me?
If God is angry, all is lost,
But what can the Rana do?

➲ What does this indicate about Mirabai's attitude towards the king?

According to some traditions, her preceptor was Raidas, a leather worker. This would indicate her defiance of the norms of caste society. After rejecting the comforts of her husband's palace, she is supposed to have donned the white robes of a widow or the saffron robe of the renouncer.

Although Mirabai did not attract a sect or group of followers, she has been recognised as a source of inspiration for centuries. Her songs continue to be sung by women and men, especially those who are poor and considered "low caste" in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

➲ Discuss...

Why do you think the traditions of Kabir, Baba Guru Nanak and Mirabai remain significant in the twenty-first century?

9. RECONSTRUCTING HISTORIES OF RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

We have seen that historians draw on a variety of sources to reconstruct histories of religious traditions – these include sculpture, architecture, stories about religious preceptors, compositions attributed to women and men engaged in the quest of understanding the nature of the Divine.

As we have seen in Chapters 1 and 4, sculpture and architecture can only be understood if we have a grasp of the context – the ideas, beliefs and practices of those who produced and used these images and buildings. What about textual traditions regarding religious beliefs? If you return to the sources in this chapter, you will notice that they include a wide variety, written in several different languages and styles. They range from the apparently simple, direct language of the *vachanas* of Basavanna to the ornate Persian of the *farman* of the Mughal emperors. Understanding each type of text requires different skills: apart from a familiarity with several languages, the historian has to be aware of the subtle variations in style that characterise each genre.

Shankaradeva

In the late fifteenth century, Shankaradeva emerged as one of the leading proponents of Vaishnavism in Assam. His teachings, often known as the Bhagavati dharma because they were based on the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Bhagavata Purana,* focused on absolute surrender to the supreme deity, in this case Vishnu. He emphasised the need for *naam kirtan,* recitation of the names of the lord in *sat sanga* or congregations of pious devotees. He also encouraged the establishment of *satra* or monasteries for the transmission of spiritual knowledge, and *naam ghar* or prayer halls. Many of these institutions and practices continue to flourish in the region. His major compositions include the *Kirtana-ghosha.*

Varieties of sources used to reconstruct the history of sufi traditions

A wide range of texts were produced in and around sufi *khanqahs.* These included:

1. Treatises or manuals dealing with sufi thought and practices – The *Kashf-ul-Mahjub* of Ali bin Usman Hujwiri (died *c.* 1071) is an example of this genre. It enables historians to see how traditions outside the subcontinent influenced sufi thought in India.

2. *Malfuzat* (literally, "uttered"; conversations of sufi saints) – An early text on *malfuzat* is the *Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad*, a collection of conversations of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, compiled by Amir Hasan Sijzi Dehlavi, a noted Persian poet. Source 9 contains an excerpt from this text. *Malfuzats* were compiled by different sufi *silsilas* with the permission of the *shaikhs*; these had obvious didactic purposes. Several examples have been found from different parts of the subcontinent, including the Deccan. They were compiled over several centuries.

3. *Maktubat* (literally, "written" collections of letters); letters written by sufi masters, addressed to their disciples and associates – While these tell us about the *shaikh's* experience of religious truth that he wanted to share with others, they also reflect the life conditions of the recipients and are responses to their aspirations and difficulties, both spiritual and mundane. The letters, known as *Maktubat-i Imam Rabbani*, of the noted seventeenth-century Naqshbandi Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (d.1624), whose ideology is often contrasted with the liberal and non-sectarian views of Akbar, are amongst those most frequently discussed by scholars.

4. *Tazkiras* (literally, "to mention and memorialise"; biographical accounts of saints) – The fourteenth-century *Siyar-ul-Auliya* of Mir Khwurd Kirmani was the first sufi *tazkira* written in India. It dealt principally with the Chishti saints. The most famous *tazkira* is the *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar* of Abdul Haqq Muhaddis Dehlavi (d. 1642). The authors of the *tazkiras* often sought to establish the precedence of their own orders and glorify their spiritual genealogies. Many details are often implausible, full of elements of the fantastic. Still they are of great value for historians and help them to understand more fully the nature of the tradition.

Remember that each of the traditions we have been considering in this chapter generated a wide range of textual and oral modes of communication, some of which have been preserved, many of which have been modified in the process of transmission, and others are probably lost forever.

Virtually all these religious traditions continue to flourish to date. This continuity has certain advantages for historians as it allows them to compare contemporary practices with those described in textual traditions or shown in old paintings and to trace changes. At the same time, because these traditions are part of peoples' lived beliefs and practices, there is often a lack of acceptance of the possibility that these may have changed over time. The challenge for historians is to undertake such investigations with sensitivity, while at the same time recognising that religious traditions, like other traditions, are dynamic and change over time.

TIMELINE
SOME MAJOR RELIGIOUS TEACHERS IN THE SUBCONTINENT

c. 500-800 CE	Appar, Sambandar, Sundaramurti in Tamil Nadu
c. 800-900	Nammalvar, Manikkavachakar, Andal, Tondaradippodi in Tamil Nadu
*c.*1000-1100	Al Hujwiri, Data Ganj Bakhsh in the Punjab; Ramanujacharya in Tamil Nadu
*c.*1100-1200	Basavanna in Karnataka
*c.*1200-1300	Jnanadeva, Muktabai in Maharashtra; Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti in Rajasthan; Bahauddin Zakariyya and Fariduddin Ganj-i Shakar in the Punjab; Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki in Delhi
*c.*1300-1400	Lal Ded in Kashmir; Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sind; Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi; Ramananda in Uttar Pradesh; Chokhamela in Maharashtra; Sharafuddin Yahya Maneri in Bihar
*c.*1400-1500	Kabir, Raidas, Surdas in Uttar Pradesh; Baba Guru Nanak in the Punjab; Vallabhacharya in Gujarat; Abdullah Shattari in Gwalior; Muhammad Shah Alam in Gujarat; Mir Sayyid Muhammad Gesu Daraz in Gulbarga, Shankaradeva in Assam; Tukaram in Maharashtra
*c.*1500-1600	Sri Chaitanya in Bengal; Mirabai in Rajasthan; Shaikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi, Malik Muhammad Jaisi, Tulsidas in Uttar Pradesh
*c.*1600-1700	Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi in Haryana; Miyan Mir in the Punjab

Note: These time frames indicate the approximate period during which these teachers lived.

ANSWER IN 100-150 WORDS

1. Explain with examples what historians mean by the integration of cults.
2. To what extent do you think the architecture of mosques in the subcontinent reflects a combination of universal ideals and local traditions?
3. What were the similarities and differences between the *be-shari‘a* and *ba-shari‘a* sufi traditions?
4. Discuss the ways in which the Alvars, Nayanars and Virashaivas expressed critiques of the caste system.
5. Describe the major teachings of either Kabir or Baba Guru Nanak, and the ways in which these have been transmitted.

WRITE A SHORT ESSAY (ABOUT 250-300 WORDS) ON THE FOLLOWING:

6. Discuss the major beliefs and practices that characterised Sufism.
7. Examine how and why rulers tried to establish connections with the traditions of the Nayanars and the sufis.
8. Analyse, with illustrations, why bhakti and sufi thinkers adopted a variety of languages in which to express their opinions.
9. Read any five of the sources included in this chapter and discuss the social and religious ideas that are expressed in them.

MAP WORK

10. On an outline map of India, plot three major sufi shrines, and three places associated with temples (one each of a form of Vishnu, Shiva and the goddess).

PROJECTS (CHOOSE ONE)

11. Choose any two of the religious teachers/thinkers/saints mentioned in this chapter, and find out more about their lives and teachings. Prepare a report about the area and the times in which they lived, their major ideas, how we know about them, and why you think they are important.
12. Find out more about practices of pilgrimage associated with the shrines mentioned in this chapter. Are these pilgrimages still undertaken? When are these shrines visited? Who visits these shrines? Why do they do so? What are the activities associated with these pilgrimages?

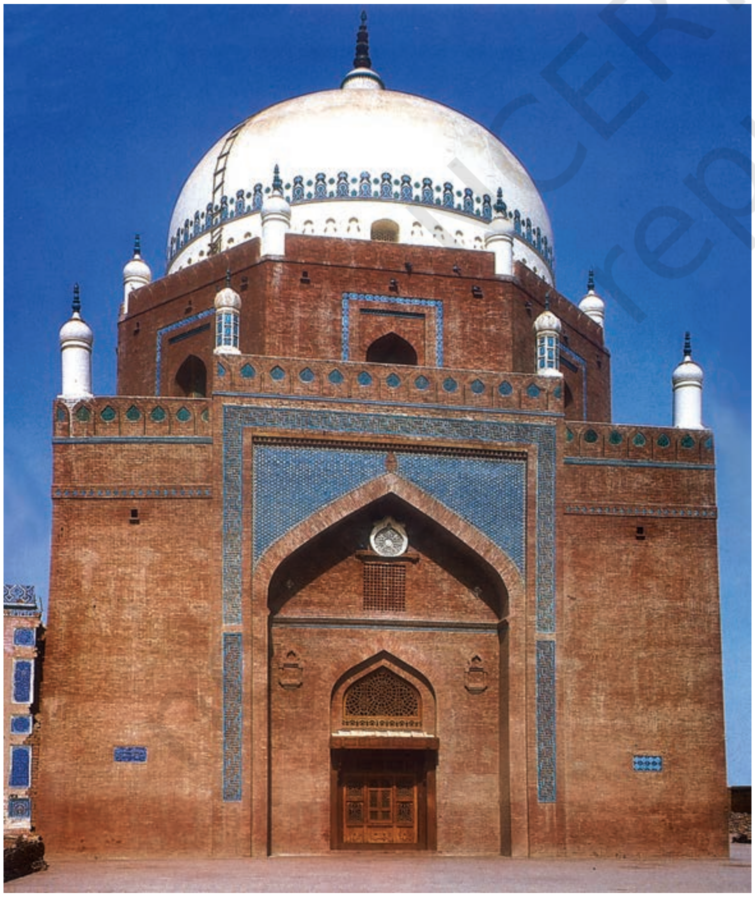


Fig. 6.18
The dargah *of Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya, Multan (Pakistan)*

If you would like to know more, read:

Richard M. Eaton (ed). 2003.
India's Islamic Traditions.
Oxford University Press,
New Delhi.

John Stratton Hawley. 2005.
Three Bhakti Voices
Mirabai, Surdas and Kabir
in their times and ours.
Oxford University Press,
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South Asia 600-1800.
Oxford University Press,
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Penguin, New Delhi.

Annemarie Schimmel. 1975.
Mystical Dimensions of Islam.
Univesity of North Carolina
Press, Chapel Hill.

David Smith. 1998.
The Dance of Siva: Religion
Art and Poetry in South India.
Cambridge Univesity Press,
New Delhi.

Charlotte Vaudeville. 1997.
A Weaver Named Kabir.
Oxford University Press,
New Delhi.

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THEME SEVEN

AN IMPERIAL CAPITAL VIJAYANAGARA

(C. FOURTEENTH TO SIXTEENTH CENTURY)

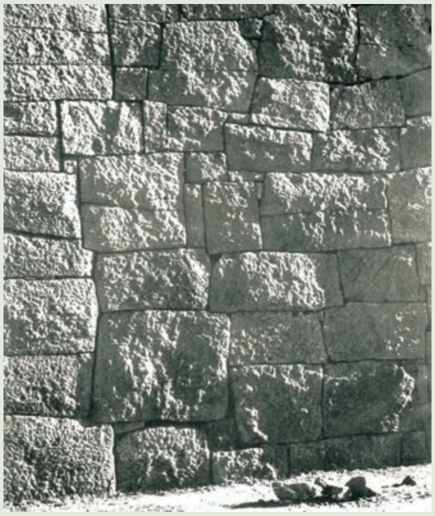


Fig. 7.1
A part of the stone wall that was built around the city of Vijayanagara

Vijayanagara or "city of victory" was the name of both a city and an empire. The empire was founded in the fourteenth century. In its heyday it stretched from the river Krishna in the north to the extreme south of the peninsula. In 1565 the city was sacked and subsequently deserted. Although it fell into ruin in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, it lived on in the memories of people living in the Krishna-Tungabhadra doab. They remembered it as Hampi, a name derived from that of the local mother goddess, Pampadevi. These oral traditions combined with archaeological finds, monuments and inscriptions and other records helped scholars to rediscover the Vijayanagara Empire.

1. THE DISCOVERY OF HAMPI

The ruins at Hampi were brought to light in 1800 by an engineer and antiquarian named Colonel Colin Mackenzie. An employee of the English East India Company, he prepared the first survey map of the site. Much of the initial information he received was based on the memories of priests of the Virupaksha temple and the shrine of Pampadevi. Subsequently, from 1856, photographers began to record the monuments which enabled scholars to study them. As early as 1836 epigraphists began collecting several dozen inscriptions found at this and other temples at Hampi. In an effort to reconstruct the history of the city and the empire, historians collated information from these sources with accounts of foreign travellers and other literature written in Telugu, Kannada, Tamil and Sanskrit.

Source 1

Colin Mackenzie

Born in 1754, Colin Mackenzie became famous as an engineer, surveyor and cartographer. In 1815 he was appointed the first Surveyor General of India, a post he held till his death in 1821. He embarked on collecting local histories and surveying historic sites in order to better understand India's past and make governance of the colony easier. He says that "it struggled long under the miseries of bad management … before the South came under the benign influence of the British government". By studying Vijayanagara, Mackenzie believed that the East India Company could gain "much useful information on many of these institutions, laws and customs whose influence still prevails among the various Tribes of Natives forming the general mass of the population to this day".

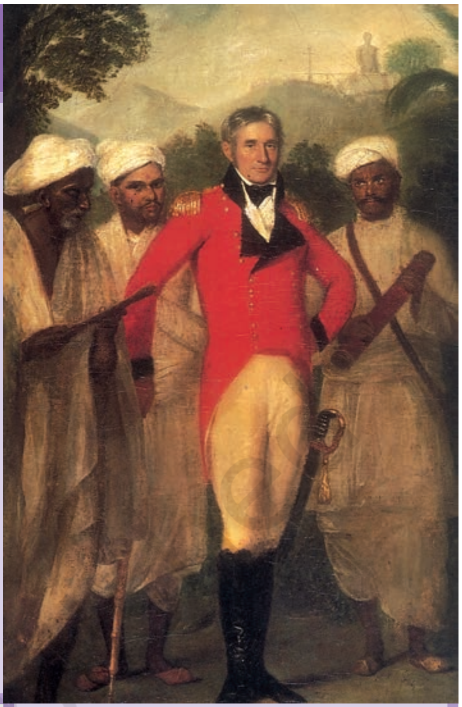


Fig. 7.2
Mackenzie and his assistants
This is a copy by an unknown artist of an oil painting by the portrait painter Thomas Hickey. It dates to *c.*1825 and belongs to the collection of the Royal Asiatic Society of Britain and Ireland. On Mackenzie's left is his peon Kistnaji holding a telescope, on his right are Brahmana assistants – a Jaina pandit (right) and behind him the Telugu Brahmana Cauvellery Ventak Letchmiah.

➲ How has the artist portrayed Mackenzie and his indigenous informers? What ideas about him and his informants are sought to be impressed upon the viewers?

2. *RAYAS, NAYAKAS* AND SULTANS

According to tradition and epigraphic evidence two brothers, Harihara and Bukka, founded the Vijayanagara Empire in 1336. This empire included within its fluctuating frontiers peoples who spoke different languages and followed different religious traditions.

On their northern frontier, the Vijayanagara kings competed with contemporary rulers – including the Sultans of the Deccan and the Gajapati rulers of Orissa – for control of the fertile river valleys and the resources generated by lucrative overseas trade. At the same time, interaction between these states led to sharing of ideas, especially in the field of architecture. The rulers of Vijayanagara borrowed concepts and building techniques which they then developed further.

Karnataka samrajyamu

While historians use the term Vijayanagara Empire, contemporaries described it as the *karnataka samrajyamu*.

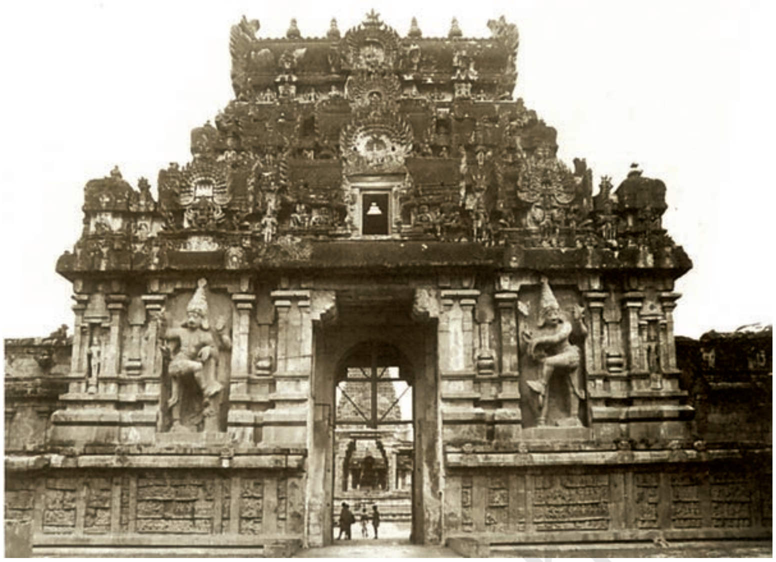


Fig. 7.3
The gopuram *or gateway of the Brihadishvara temple at Thanjavur*

Elephants, horses and men

Gajapati literally means lord of elephants. This was the name of a ruling lineage that was very powerful in Orissa in the fifteenth century. In the popular traditions of Vijayanagara the Deccan Sultans are termed as *ashvapati* or lord of horses and the *rayas* are called *narapati* or lord of men.

Some of the areas that were incorporated within the empire had witnessed the development of powerful states such as those of the Cholas in Tamil Nadu and the Hoysalas in Karnataka. Ruling elites in these areas had extended patronage to elaborate temples such as the Brihadishvara temple at Thanjavur and the Chennakeshava temple at Belur. The rulers of Vijayanagara, who called themselves *rayas*, built on these traditions and carried them, as we will see, literally to new heights.

2.1 Kings and traders

As warfare during these times depended upon effective cavalry, the import of horses from Arabia and Central Asia was very important for rival kingdoms. This trade was initially controlled by Arab traders. Local communities of merchants known as *kudirai chettis* or horse merchants also participated in these exchanges. From 1498 other actors appeared on the scene. These were the Portuguese, who arrived on the west coast of the subcontinent and attempted to establish trading and military stations. Their superior military technology, especially the use of muskets, enabled them to become important players in the tangled politics of the period.

In fact, Vijayanagara was also noted for its markets dealing in spices, textiles and precious stones. Trade was often regarded as a status symbol for such cities, which boasted of a wealthy population that demanded high-value exotic goods, especially precious stones and jewellery. The revenue derived from trade in turn contributed significantly to the prosperity of the state.

2.2 The apogee and decline of the empire

Within the polity, claimants to power included members of the ruling lineage as well as military commanders. The first dynasty, known as the Sangama dynasty, exercised control till 1485. They were supplanted by the Saluvas, military commanders, who remained in power till 1503 when they were replaced by the Tuluvas. Krishnadeva Raya belonged to the Tuluva dynasty.

Krishnadeva Raya's rule was characterised by expansion and consolidation. This was the time when the land between the Tungabhadra and Krishna rivers (the Raichur doab) was acquired (1512), the rulers of Orissa were subdued (1514) and severe defeats were inflicted on the Sultan of Bijapur (1520). Although the kingdom remained in a constant state of military preparedness, it flourished under conditions of unparalleled peace and prosperity. Krishnadeva Raya is credited with building some fine temples and adding impressive *gopurams* to many important south Indian temples. He also founded a suburban township near Vijayanagara called Nagalapuram after his mother. Some of the most detailed descriptions of Vijayanagara come from his time or just after.

Strain began to show within the imperial structure following Krishnadeva Raya's death in 1529. His successors were troubled by rebellious *nayakas* or military chiefs. By 1542 control at the centre had shifted to another ruling lineage, that of the Aravidu, which remained in power till the end of the seventeenth century. During this period, as indeed earlier, the military ambitions of the rulers of Vijayanagara as well as those of the Deccan Sultanates resulted in shifting alignments. Eventually this led to an alliance of the Sultanates against Vijayanagara. In 1565 Rama Raya, the chief minister of Vijayanagara, led the army into battle at Rakshasi-Tangadi (also known as Talikota), where his forces were routed by the combined armies of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar and Golconda. The victorious armies sacked the city of Vijayanagara. The city was totally abandoned within a few years. Now the focus of the empire shifted to the east where the Aravidu

Source 2

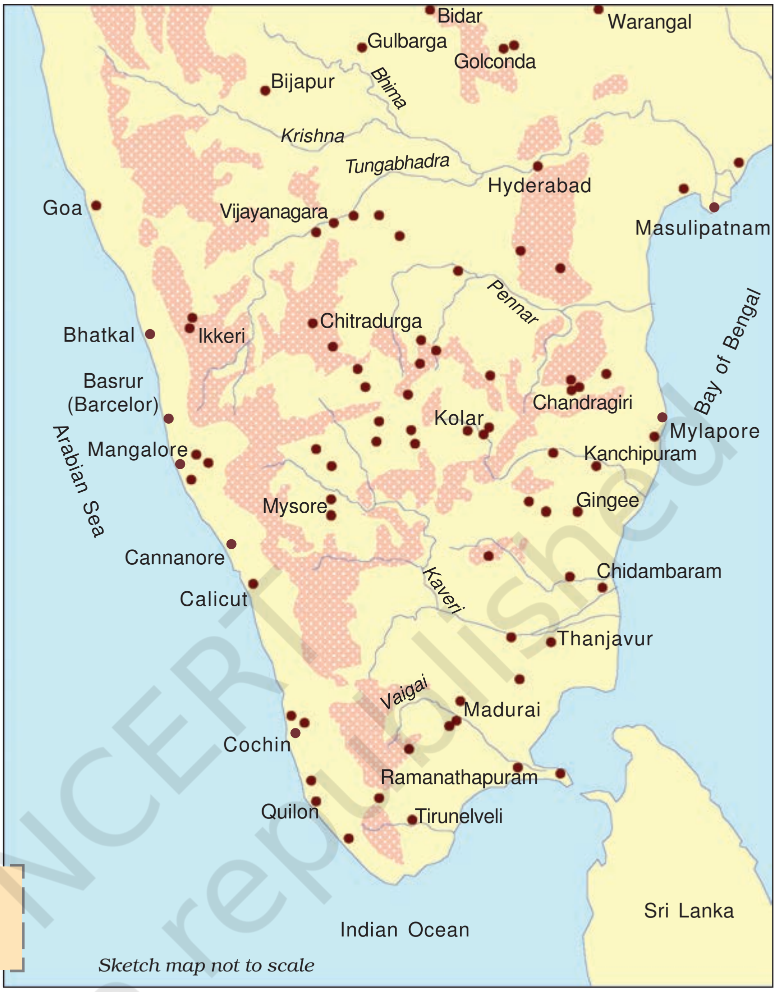
Kings and traders

Krishnadeva Raya (ruled 1509-29), the most famous ruler of Vijayanagara, composed a work on statecraft in Telugu known as the *Amuktamalyada*. About traders he wrote:

> A king should improve the harbours of his country and so encourage its commerce that horses, elephants, precious gems, sandalwood, pearls and other articles are freely imported … He should arrange that the foreign sailors who land in his country on account of storms, illness and exhaustion are looked after in a suitable manner … Make the merchants of distant foreign countries who import elephants and good horses be attached to yourself by providing them with daily audience, presents and allowing decent profits. Then those articles will never go to your enemies.

➲ Why do you think the king was interested in encouraging trade? Which groups of people would have benefited from these transactions?

Map 1
South India,
c. *fourteenth-eighteenth century*


Bidar
Warangal
Gulbarga
Golconda
Bijapur
Bhima
Krishna
Tungabhadra
Hyderabad
Goa
Vijayanagara
Masulipatnam
Pennar
Bay of Bengal
Bhatkal
Ikkeri
Chitradurga
Basrur
(Barcelor)
Chandragiri
Kolar
Mylapore
Arabian Sea
Mangalore
Kanchipuram
Gingee
Mysore
Cannanore
Kaveri
Chidambaram
Calicut
Thanjavur
Vaigai
Madurai
Cochin
Ramanathapuram
Quilon
Tirunelveli
Sri Lanka
Indian Ocean
Sketch map not to scale

➲ Identify the present-day states that formed part of the empire.

Yavana is a Sanskrit word used for the Greeks and other peoples who entered the subcontinent from the north west.

dynasty ruled from Penukonda and later from Chandragiri (near Tirupati).

Although the armies of the Sultans were responsible for the destruction of the city of Vijayanagara, relations between the Sultans and the *rayas* were not always or inevitably hostile, in spite of religious differences. Krishnadeva Raya, for example, supported some claimants to power in the Sultanates and took pride in the title "establisher of the Yavana kingdom". Similarly, the Sultan of Bijapur intervened to resolve succession disputes in Vijayanagara following the death of Krishnadeva Raya. In fact the Vijayanagara kings were keen to ensure the stability of the Sultanates and vice versa. It was the adventurous policy of Rama Raya who tried to play off one Sultan against another that led the Sultans to combine together and decisively defeat him.

2.3 The *rayas* and the *nayakas*

Among those who exercised power in the empire were military chiefs who usually controlled forts and had armed supporters. These chiefs often moved from one area to another, and in many cases were accompanied by peasants looking for fertile land on which to settle. These chiefs were known as *nayakas* and they usually spoke Telugu or Kannada. Many *nayakas* submitted to the authority of the kings of Vijayanagara but they often rebelled and had to be subdued by military action.

The *amara-nayaka* system was a major political innovation of the Vijayanagara Empire. It is likely that many features of this system were derived from the *iqta* system of the Delhi Sultanate.

The *amara-nayakas* were military commanders who were given territories to govern by the *raya*. They collected taxes and other dues from peasants, craftspersons and traders in the area. They retained part of the revenue for personal use and for maintaining a stipulated contingent of horses and elephants. These contingents provided the Vijayanagara kings with an effective fighting force with which they brought the entire southern peninsula under their control. Some of the revenue was also used for the maintenance of temples and irrigation works.

The *amara-nayakas* sent tribute to the king annually and personally appeared in the royal court with gifts to express their loyalty. Kings occasionally asserted their control over them by transferring them from one place to another. However, during the course of the seventeenth century, many of these *nayakas* established independent kingdoms. This hastened the collapse of the central imperial structure.

Amara is believed to be derived from the Sanskrit word *samara*, meaning battle or war. It also resembles the Persian term *amir*, meaning a high noble.

➲ Discuss...

Locate Chandragiri, Madurai, Ikkeri, Thanjavur and Mysore, all centres of *nayaka* power, on Map 1. Discuss the ways in which rivers and hills may have facilitated or hindered communication with Vijayanagara in each case.

3. VIJAYANAGARA THE CAPITAL AND ITS ENVIRONS

Like most capitals, Vijayanagara, was characterised by a distinctive physical layout and building style.

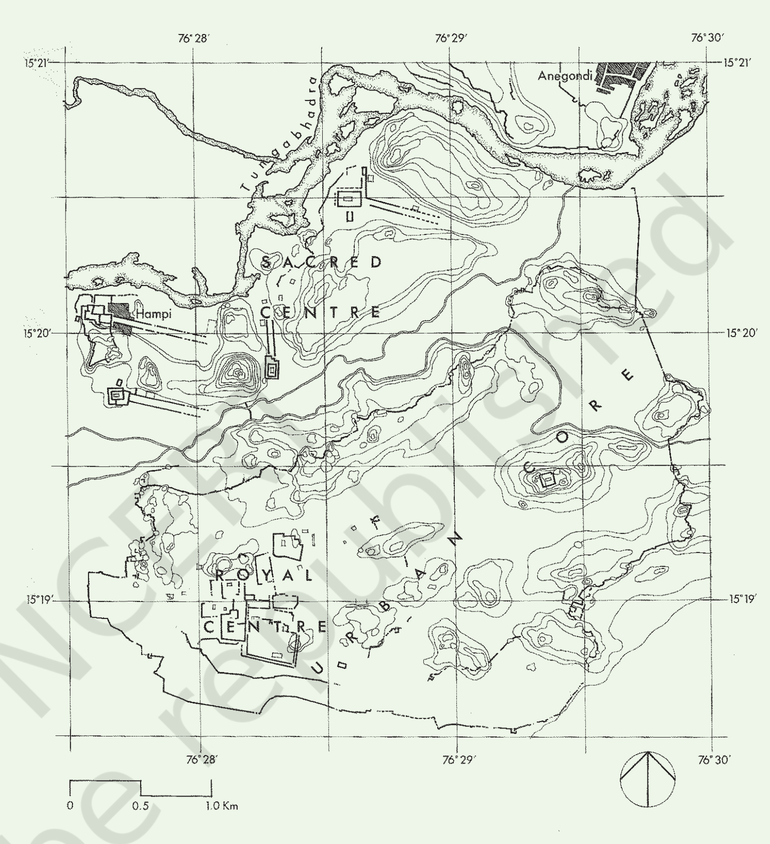


Fig. 7.4
Plan of Vijayanagara

➲ Identify three major zones on the plan. Look at the central part. Can you see channels connecting up with the river? See how many fortification walls you can trace. Was the sacred centre fortified?

Finding out about the city

A large number of inscriptions of the kings of Vijayanagara and their *nayakas* recording donations to temples as well as describing important events have been recovered. Several travellers visited the city and wrote about it. Notable among their accounts are those of an Italian trader named Nicolo de Conti, an ambassador named Abdur Razzaq sent by the ruler of Persia, a merchant named Afanasii Nikitin from Russia, all of whom visited the city in the fifteenth century, and those of Duarte Barbosa, Domingo Paes and Fernao Nuniz from Portugal, who came in the sixteenth century.

Source 3

A sprawling city

This is an excerpt from Domingo Paes's description of Vijayanagara:

> The size of this city I do not write here, because it cannot all be seen from any one spot, but I climbed a hill whence I could see a great part of it; I could not see it all because it lies between several ranges of hills. What I saw from thence seemed to me as large as Rome, and very beautiful to the sight; there are many groves of trees within it, in the gardens of the houses, and many conduits of water which flow into the midst of it, and in places there are lakes; and the king has close to his palace a palm-grove and other rich fruit-bearing trees.

➲ Would you find these features in a city today? Why do you think the gardens and water bodies were selected for special mention by Paes?

3.1 Water resources

The most striking feature about the location of Vijayanagara is the natural basin formed by the river Tungabhadra which flows in a north-easterly direction. The surrounding landscape is characterised by stunning granite hills that seem to form a girdle around the city. A number of streams flow down to the river from these rocky outcrops.

In almost all cases embankments were built along these streams to create reservoirs of varying sizes. As this is one of the most arid zones of the peninsula, elaborate arrangements had to be made to store rainwater and conduct it to the city. The most important such tank was built in the early years of the fifteenth century and is now called Kamalapuram tank. Water from this tank not only irrigated fields nearby but was also conducted through a channel to the "royal centre".

One of the most prominent waterworks to be seen among the ruins is the Hiriya canal. This canal drew water from a dam across the Tungabhadra and irrigated the cultivated valley that separated the "sacred centre" from the "urban core". This was apparently built by kings of the Sangama dynasty.

3.2 Fortifications and roads

Before we examine the different parts of the city in detail let us look at what enclosed them all – the great fortress walls. Abdur Razzaq, an ambassador sent by the ruler of Persia to Calicut (present-day Kozhikode) in the fifteenth century, was greatly impressed by the fortifications, and mentioned seven lines of forts. These encircled not only the city but also its agricultural hinterland and forests. The outermost wall linked the hills surrounding the city. The massive masonry construction was slightly tapered. No mortar or cementing agent was employed anywhere in the construction. The stone blocks were wedge shaped, which held them in place, and the inner portion of the walls was of earth packed with rubble. Square or rectangular bastions projected outwards.

What was most significant about this fortification is that it enclosed agricultural tracts. Abdur Razzaq noted that "between the first, second and the third walls there are cultivated fields, gardens and houses". And Paes observed: "From this first circuit until you

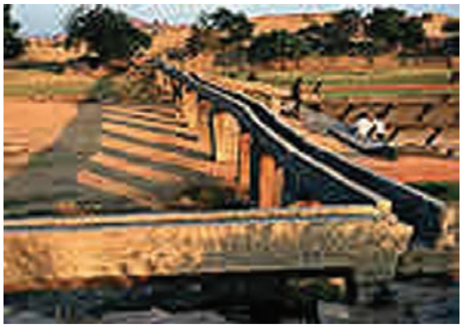
Source 4

How tanks were built

About a tank constructed by Krishnadeva Raya, Paes wrote:

> The king made a tank … at the mouth of two hills so that all the water which comes from either one side or the other collects there; and, besides this, water comes to it from more than three leagues (approximately 15 kilometres) by pipes which run along the lower parts of the range outside. This water is brought from a lake which itself overflows into a little river. The tank has three large pillars handsomely carved with figures; these connect above with certain pipes by which they get water when they have to irrigate their gardens and rice-fields. In order to make this tank the said king broke down a hill … In the tank I saw so many people at work that there must have been fifteen or twenty thousand men, looking like ants …

Fig. 7.5
An aqueduct leading into the royal centre



enter the city there is a great distance, in which are fields in which they sow rice and have many gardens and much water, in which water comes from two lakes." These statements have been corroborated by present-day archaeologists, who have also found evidence of an agricultural tract between the sacred centre and the urban core. This tract was serviced by an elaborate canal system drawing water from the Tungabhadra.

Why do you think agricultural tracts were incorporated within the fortified area? Often, the objective of medieval sieges was to starve the defenders into submission. These sieges could last for several months and sometimes even years. Normally rulers tried to be prepared for such situations by building large granaries within fortified areas. The rulers of Vijayanagara adopted a more expensive and elaborate strategy of protecting the agricultural belt itself.

A second line of fortification went round the inner core of the urban complex, and a third line surrounded the royal centre, within which each set of major buildings was surrounded by its own high walls.

The fort was entered through well-guarded gates, which linked the city to the major roads. Gateways were distinctive architectural features that often defined the structures to which they regulated access. The arch on the gateway leading into the fortified settlement as well as the dome over the gate (Fig. 7.6) are regarded as typical features of the architecture introduced by the Turkish Sultans. Art historians refer to this style as Indo-Islamic, as it grew continually through interaction with local building practices in different regions.

Archaeologists have studied roads within the city and those leading out from it. These have been identified by tracing paths through gateways, as well as by finds of pavements. Roads generally wound around through the valleys, avoiding rocky terrain. Some of the most important roads extended from temple gateways, and were lined by bazaars.

3.3 The urban core

Moving along the roads leading into the urban core, there is relatively little archaeological evidence of the houses of ordinary people. Archaeologists have

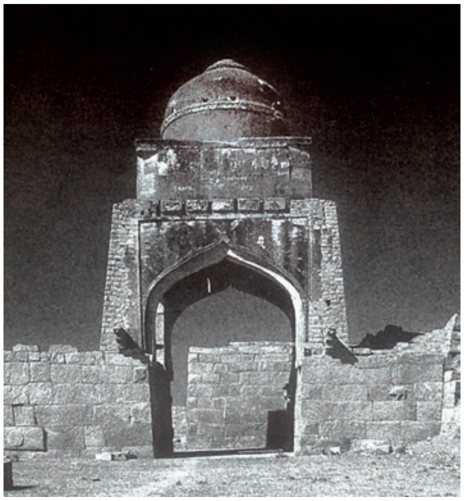
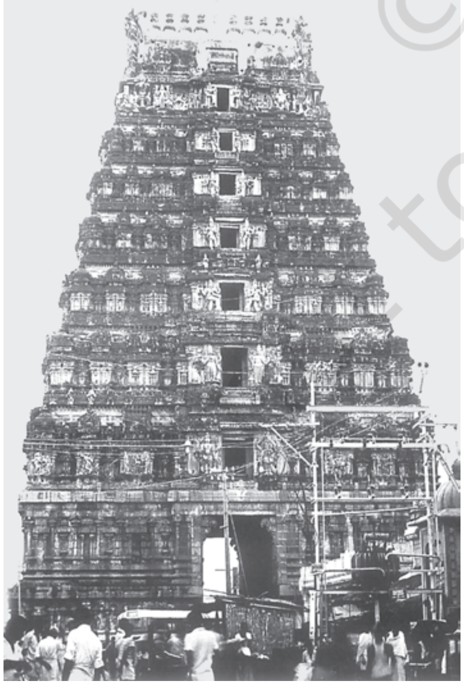


Fig. 7.6
A gateway in the fortification wall

➲ Describe the similarities and differences between these two entrances.
Why do you think the rulers of Vijayanagara adopted elements of Indo-Islamic architecture?

Fig. 7.7
A gopuram



found fine Chinese porcelain in some areas, including in the north-eastern corner of the urban core and suggest that these areas may have been occupied by rich traders. This was also the Muslim residential quarter. Tombs and mosques located here have distinctive functions, yet their architecture resembles that of the *mandapas* found in the temples of Hampi.

This is how the sixteenth-century Portuguese traveller Barbosa described the houses of ordinary people, which have not survived: "The other houses of the people are thatched, but nonetheless well built and arranged according to occupations, in long streets with many open places."

Field surveys indicate that the entire area was dotted with numerous shrines and small temples, pointing to the prevalence of a variety of cults, perhaps supported by different communities. The surveys also indicate that wells, rainwater tanks as well as temple tanks may have served as sources of water to the ordinary town dwellers.

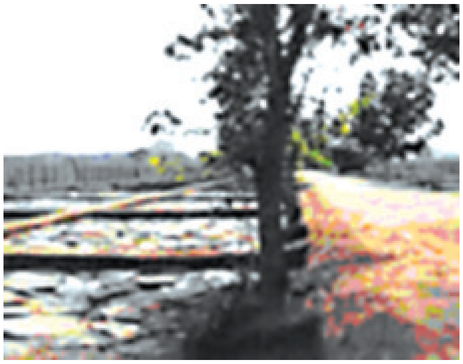


Fig. 7.8
Part of an excavated pavement

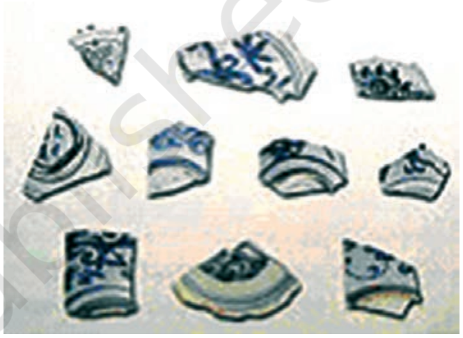


Fig. 7.9
Shards of Chinese porcelain

➲ What kinds of vessels do you think these shards were originally parts of?

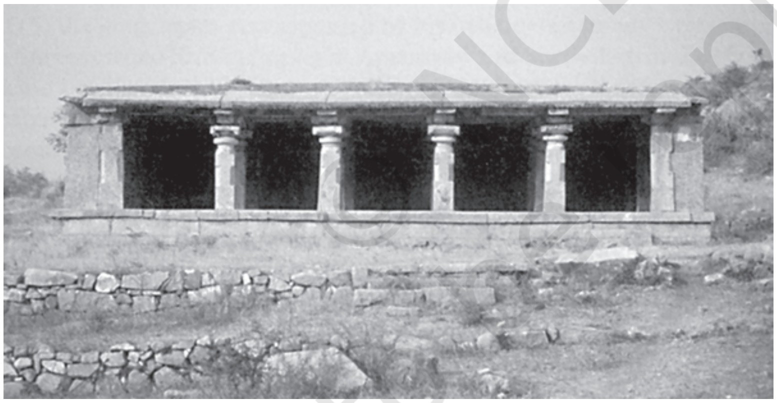


Fig. 7.10
A mosque in Vijayanagara

➲ Does the mosque have the typical features of Indo-Islamic architecture?

4. THE ROYAL CENTRE

The royal centre was located in the south-western part of the settlement. Although designated as a royal centre, it included over 60 temples. Clearly, the patronage of temples and cults was important for rulers who were trying to establish and legitimise their authority through association with the divinities housed in the shrines.

About thirty building complexes have been identified as palaces. These are relatively large structures that do not seem to have been associated

➲ Discuss...
Compare the layout of Vijayanagara with that of your town or village.

A House of Victory?

This is what Paes had to say about the audience hall and the *mahanavami dibba*, which together he called the "House of Victory":

> These buildings have two platforms one above the other, beautifully sculpted … On the upper platform … in this House of Victory the king has a room made of cloth … where the idol has a shrine … and in the other in the middle is placed a dais on which stands a throne of state, (the crown and the royal anklet) …

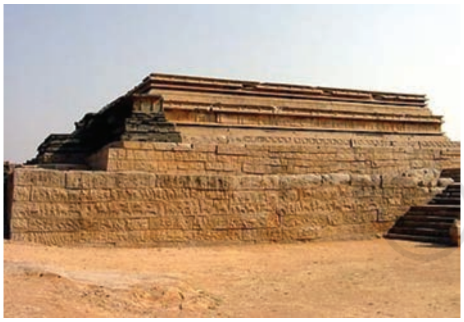


Fig. 7.11
The mahanavami dibba

with ritual functions. One difference between these structures and temples is that the latter were constructed entirely of masonry, while the superstructure of the secular buildings was made of perishable materials.

4.1 The *mahanavami dibba*

Some of the more distinctive structures in the area have been assigned names based on the form of the buildings as well as their functions. The "king's palace" is the largest of the enclosures but has not yielded definitive evidence of being a royal residence. It has two of the most impressive platforms, usually called the "audience hall" and the "*mahanavami dibba*". The entire complex is surrounded by high double walls with a street running between them. The audience hall is a high platform with slots for wooden pillars at close and regular intervals. It had a staircase going up to the second floor, which rested on these pillars. The pillars being closely spaced, would have left little free space and thus it is not clear what the hall was used for.

Located on one of the highest points in the city, the "*mahanavami dibba*" is a massive platform rising from a base of about 11,000 sq. ft to a height of 40 ft. There is evidence that it supported a wooden structure. The base of the platform is covered with relief carvings (Fig. 7.12).

Rituals associated with the structure probably coincided with Mahanavami (literally, the great ninth day) of the ten-day Hindu festival during the autumn months of September and October, known variously as Dusehra (northern India), Durga Puja (in Bengal)

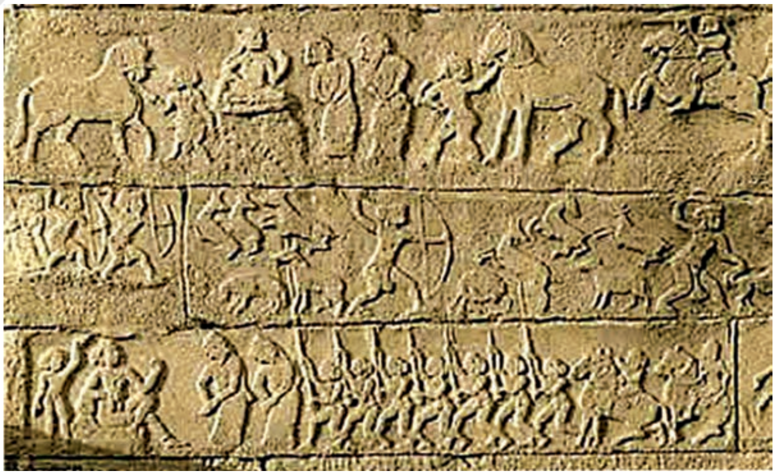


Fig. 7.12
Carvings on the mahanavami dibba

➲ Can you identify the themes of the carvings?

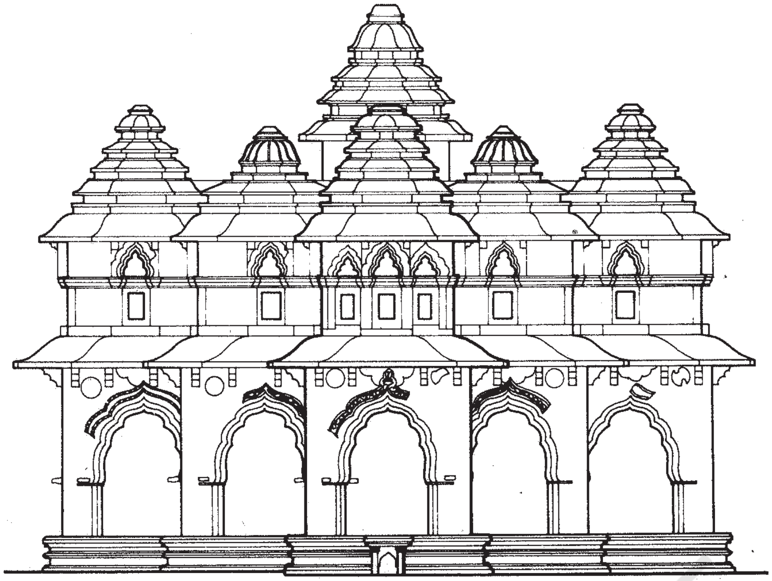


Fig. 7.13
An elevation drawing of the Lotus Mahal
An elevation is a vertical view of any object or structure. It gives you an idea of features that cannot be seen in a photograph. Notice the arches. These were probably inspired by Indo-Islamic techniques.

➲ Compare Figs. 7.13 and 7.15, and make a list of the features that are common to both, as well as those that can be seen in only one. Also compare the arch in Fig. 7.14 with the arch in Fig. 7.6. The Lotus Mahal had nine towers – a high central one, and eight along the sides. How many can you see in the photograph and how many in the elevation?
If you had to rename the Lotus Mahal, what would you call it?

and Navaratri or Mahanavami (in peninsular India). The Vijayanagara kings displayed their prestige, power and suzerainty on this occasion.

The ceremonies performed on the occasion included worship of the image, worship of the state horse, and the sacrifice of buffaloes and other animals. Dances, wrestling matches, and processions of caparisoned horses, elephants and chariots and soldiers, as well as ritual presentations before the king and his guests by the chief *nayakas* and subordinate kings marked the occasion. These ceremonies were imbued with deep symbolic meanings. On the last day of the festival the king inspected his army and the armies of the *nayakas* in a grand ceremony in an open field. On this occasion the *nayakas* brought rich gifts for the king as well as the stipulated tribute.

Was the "*mahanavami dibba*" that stands today the centre of this elaborate ritual? Scholars have pointed out that the space surrounding the structure does not seem to have been adequate for elaborate processions of armed men, women, and large numbers of animals. Like some of the other structures in the royal centre, it remains an enigma.

4.2 Other buildings in the royal centre

One of the most beautiful buildings in the royal centre is the Lotus Mahal, so named by British travellers in the nineteenth century. While the name is certainly romantic, historians are not quite sure

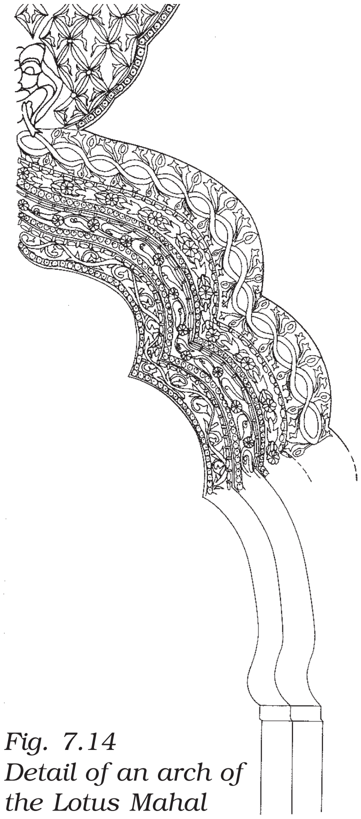
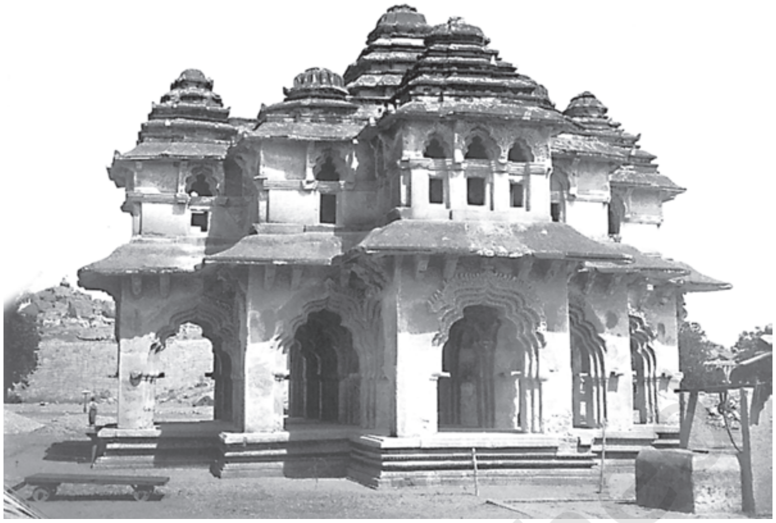


Fig. 7.14
Detail of an arch of the Lotus Mahal

Fig. 7.15
A photograph of the Lotus Mahal



➲ Compare Figs. 7.16 a and 7.16 b with Fig. 7.17, making a list of features visible in each one.
Do you think these were actually elephant stables?

what the building was used for. One suggestion, found in a map drawn by Mackenzie, is that it may have been a council chamber, a place where the king met his advisers.

While most temples were located in the sacred centre, there were several in the royal centre as well.

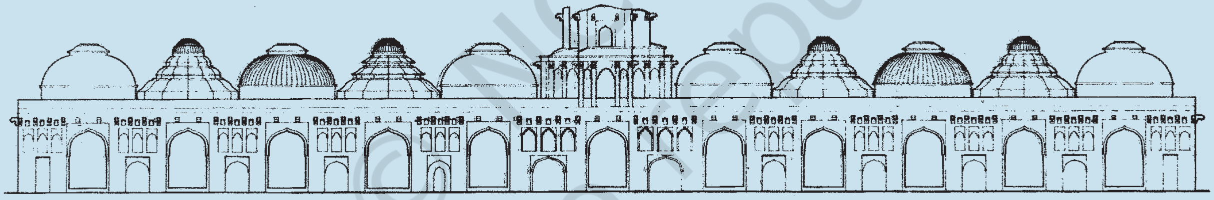


Fig. 7.16 a *Elevation of the "elephant stables"*

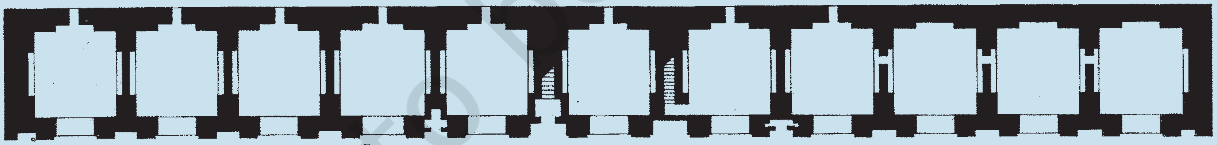


Fig. 7.16 b *Plan of the "elephant stables"*. A plan gives a horizontal view of a structure.

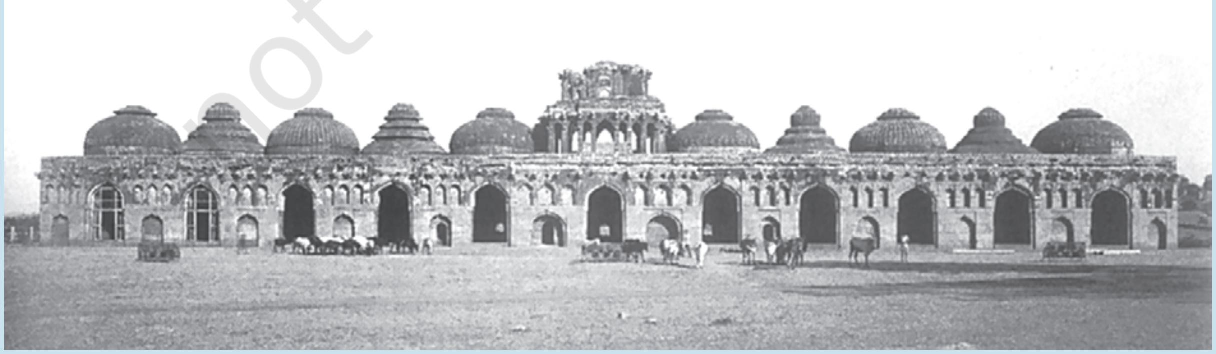


Fig. 7.17 *"Elephant stables" located close to the Lotus Mahal*

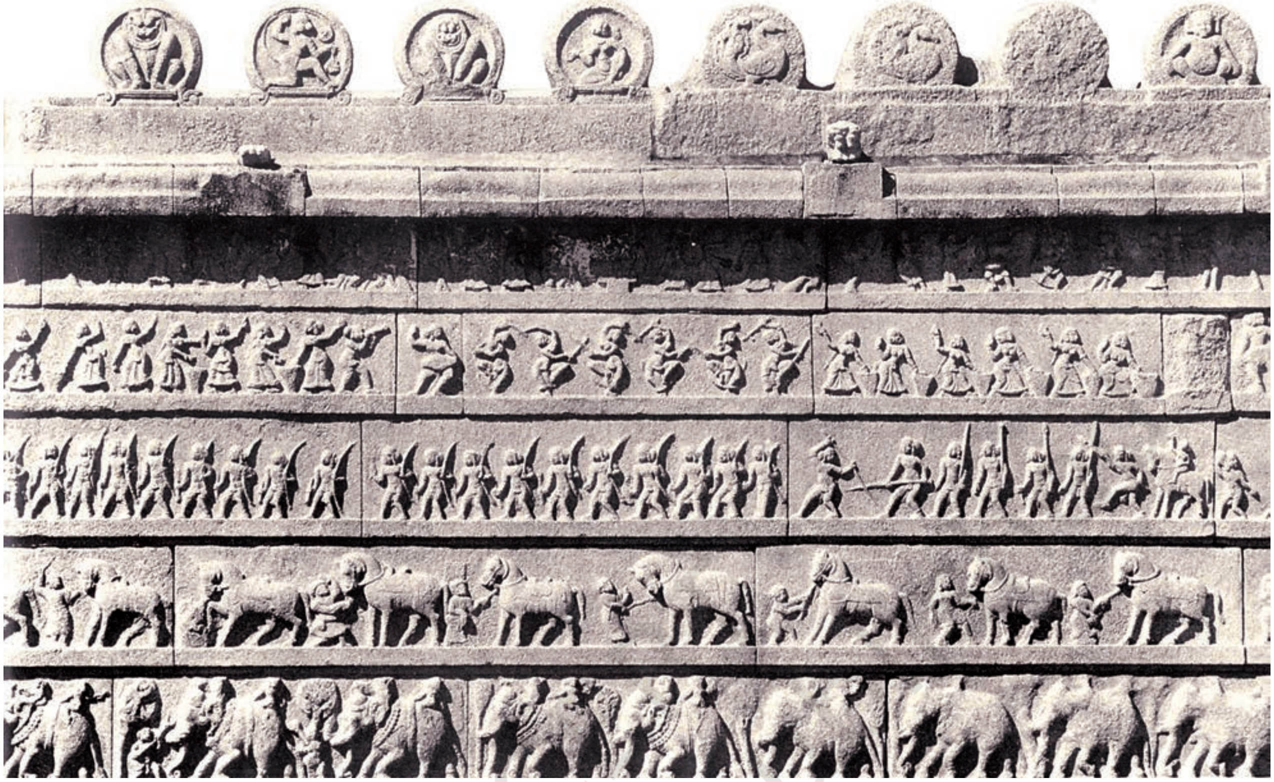


Fig. 7.18
Sculpture from the Hazara Rama temple

➲ Can you identify scenes of dancing? Why do you think elephants and horses were depicted on the panels?

One of the most spectacular of these is one known as the Hazara Rama temple. This was probably meant to be used only by the king and his family. The images in the central shrine are missing; however, sculpted panels on the walls survive. These include scenes from the *Ramayana* sculpted on the inner walls of the shrine.

While many of the structures at Vijayanagara were destroyed when the city was sacked, traditions of building palatial structures were continued by the *nayakas*. Many of these buildings have survived.

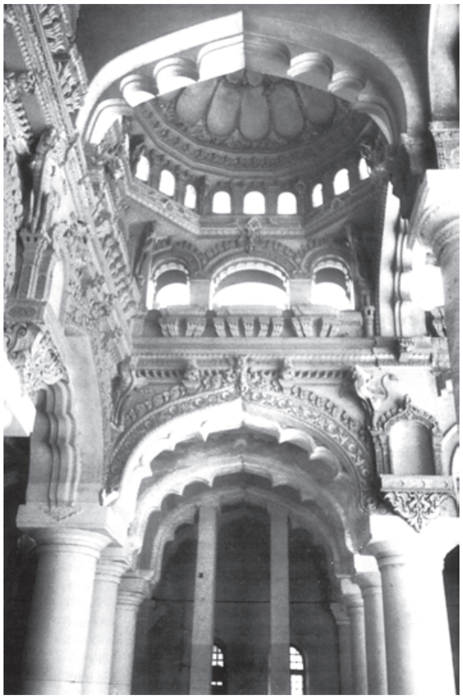


Fig. 7.19
Interior of the audience hall at Madurai
Note the arches.

➲ Discuss...

Why did the *nayakas* continue with the building traditions of the rulers of Vijayanagara?

5. THE SACRED CENTRE

5.1 Choosing a capital

We now move to the rocky northern end of the city on the banks of the Tungabhadra. According to local tradition, these hills sheltered the monkey kingdom of Vali and Sugriva mentioned in the *Ramayana*. Other traditions suggest that Pampadevi, the local mother goddess, did penance in these hills in order to marry Virupaksha, the guardian deity of the kingdom, also recognised as a form of Shiva. To this day this marriage is celebrated annually in the Virupaksha temple. Among these hills are found Jaina temples of the pre-Vijayanagara period as well. In other words, this area was associated with several sacred traditions.

Temple building in the region had a long history, going back to dynasties such as the Pallavas, Chalukyas, Hoysalas and Cholas. Rulers very often encouraged temple building as a means of associating themselves with the divine – often, the deity was explicitly or implicitly identified with the king. Temples also functioned as centres of learning. Besides, rulers and others often granted land and other resources for the maintenance of temples. Consequently, temples developed as significant religious, social, cultural and economic centres. From the point of view of the rulers, constructing, repairing and maintaining temples were important means of winning support and recognition for their power, wealth and piety.

It is likely that the very choice of the site of Vijayanagara was inspired by the existence of the shrines of Virupaksha and Pampadevi. In fact the Vijayanagara kings claimed to rule on behalf of the god Virupaksha. All royal orders were signed "Shri Virupaksha", usually in the Kannada script. Rulers also indicated their close links with the gods by using the title "Hindu Suratrana". This was a Sanskritisation of the Arabic term Sultan, meaning king, so it literally meant Hindu Sultan.

Even as they drew on earlier traditions, the rulers of Vijayanagara innovated and developed these. Royal portrait sculpture was now displayed in temples, and the king's visits to temples were treated as important state occasions on which he was accompanied by the important *nayakas* of the empire.

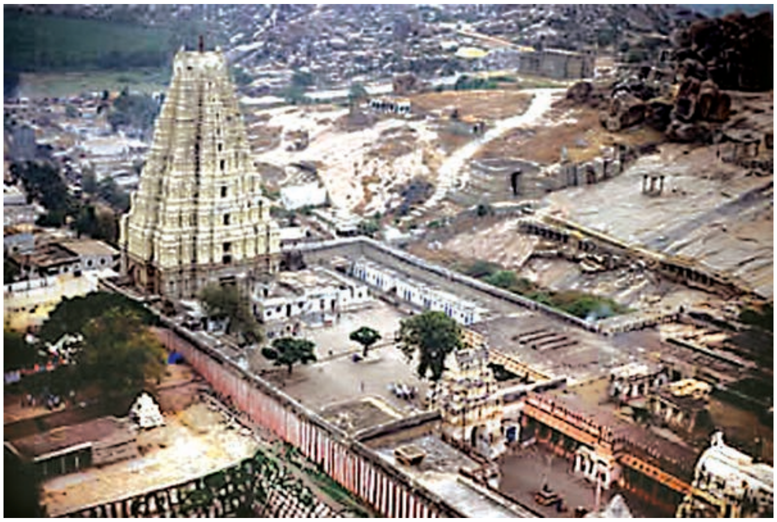


Fig. 7.20
An aerial view of the Virupaksha temple

5.2. *Gopurams* and *mandapas*

In terms of temple architecture, by this period certain new features were in evidence. These included structures of immense scale that must have been a mark of imperial authority, best exemplified by the raya *gopurams* (Fig. 7.7) or royal gateways that often dwarfed the towers on the central shrines, and signalled the presence of the temple from a great

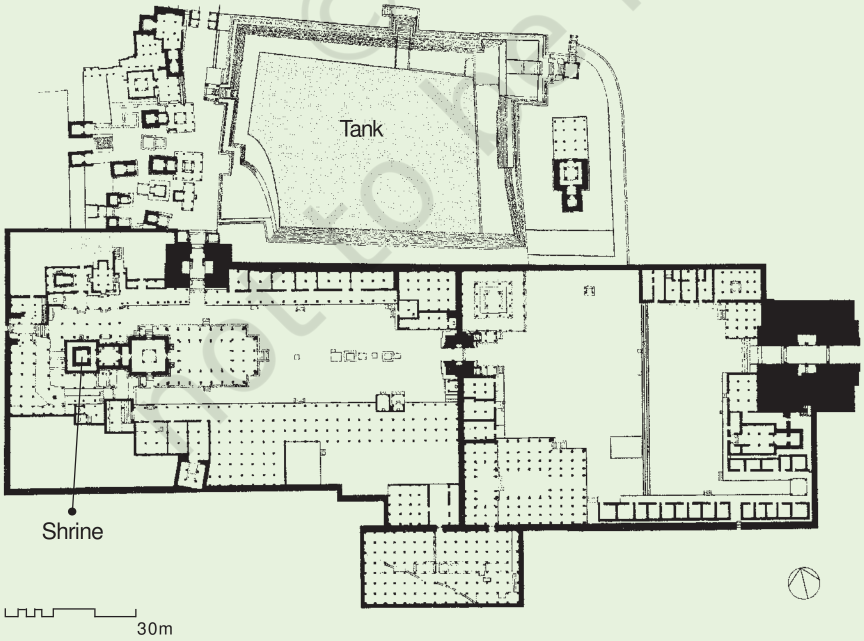


Fig. 7.21
A plan of the Virupaksha temple
Most of the square structures are shrines. The two major gateways are shaded in black. Each tiny dot represents a pillar. Rows of pillars arranged in lines within a square or rectangular frame appear to demarcate major halls, pavilions and corridors.

➲ Using the scale in the plan, measure the distance from the main *gopuram* to the central shrine. What would have been the easiest access from the tank to the shrine?

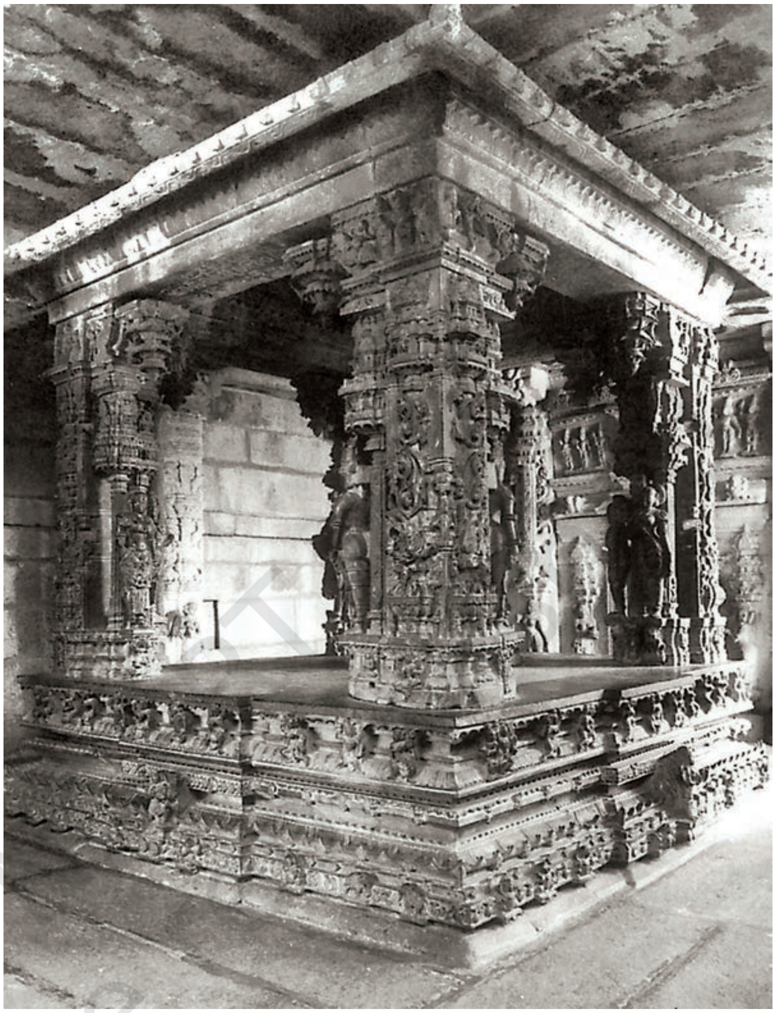


Fig. 7.22
A kalyana mandapa, *meant to celebrate divine weddings*

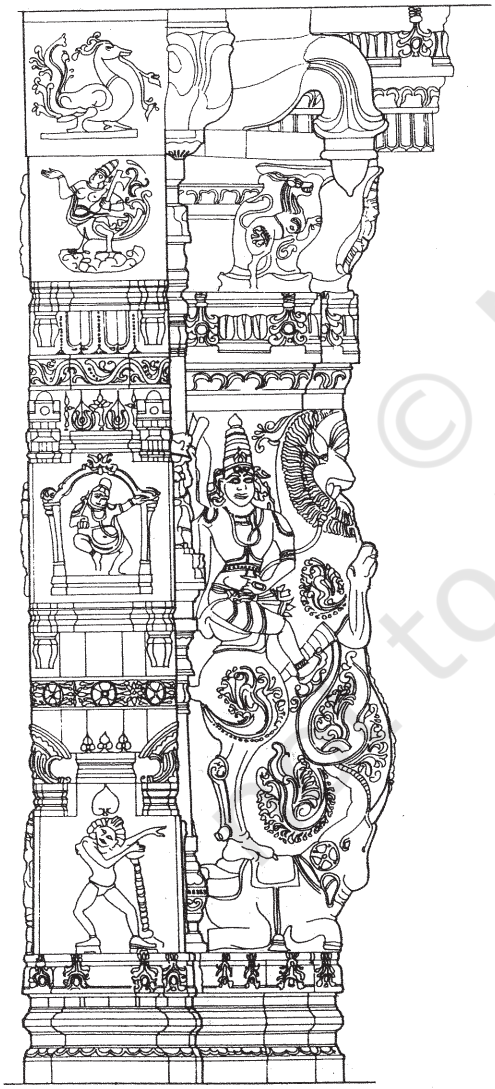


Fig. 7.23
A line drawing of a sculpted pillar

➲ Describe what you see on the pillar.

distance. They were also probably meant as reminders of the power of kings, able to command the resources, techniques and skills needed to construct these towering gateways. Other distinctive features include *mandapas* or pavilions and long, pillared corridors that often ran around the shrines within the temple complex. Let us look at two temples more closely – the Virupaksha temple and the Vitthala temple.

The Virupaksha temple was built over centuries. While inscriptions suggest that the earliest shrine dated to the ninth-tenth centuries, it was substantially enlarged with the establishment of the Vijayanagara Empire. The hall in front of the main shrine was built by Krishnadeva Raya to mark his accession. This was decorated with delicately carved pillars. He is also credited with the construction of the eastern *gopuram*. These additions meant that the central shrine came to occupy a relatively small part of the complex.

The halls in the temple were used for a variety of purposes. Some were spaces in which the images of gods were placed to witness special programmes of music, dance, drama, etc. Others were used to celebrate the marriages of deities, and yet others were meant for the deities to swing in. Special images, distinct from those kept in the small central shrine, were used on these occasions.

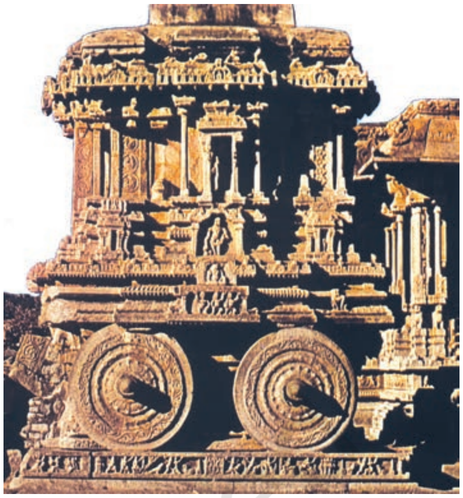


Fig. 7.24
The chariot of the Vitthala temple

➲ Do you think chariots would have actually been built like this?

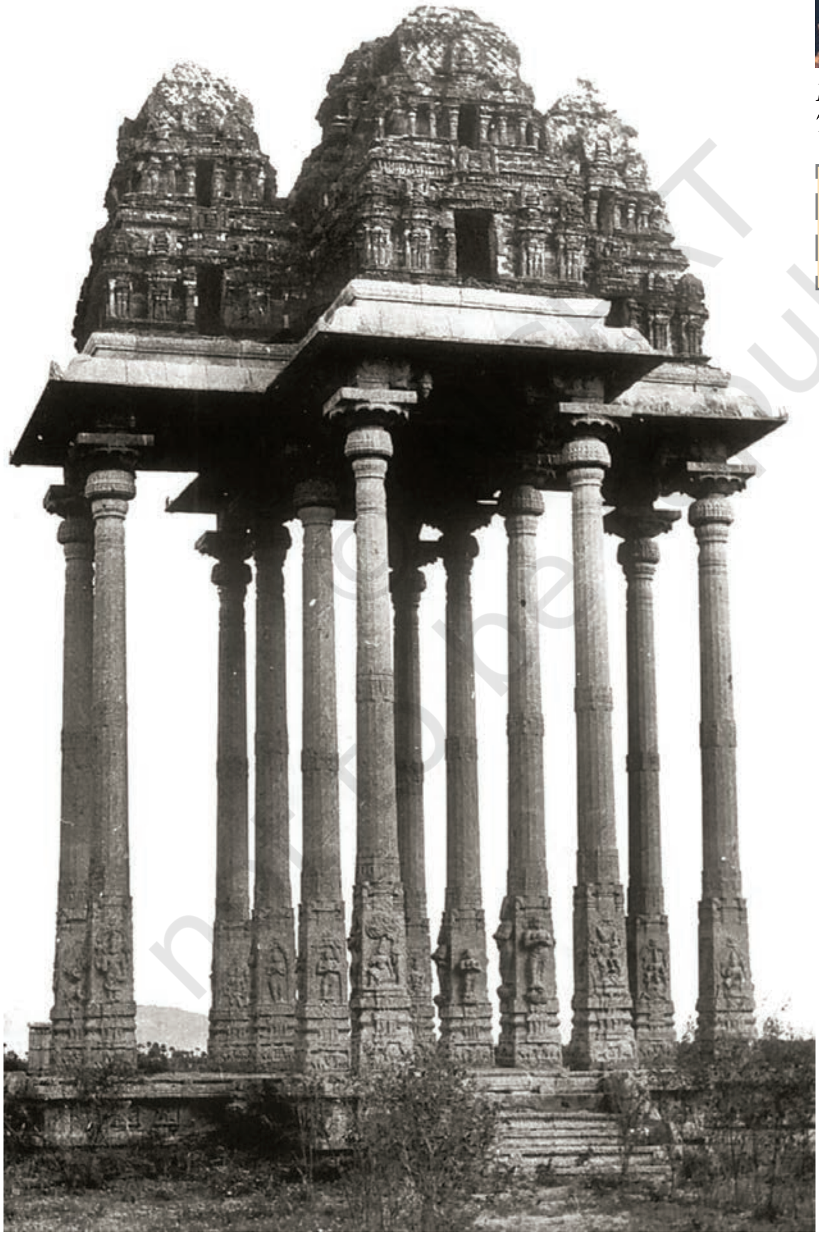


Fig. 7.25
Swing pavilion from Gingee

Another shrine, the Vitthala temple, is also interesting. Here, the principal deity was Vitthala, a form of Vishnu generally worshipped in Maharashtra. The introduction of the worship of the deity in Karnataka is another indication of the ways in which the rulers of Vijayanagara drew on different traditions to create an imperial culture. As in the case of other temples, this temple too has several halls and a unique shrine designed as a chariot (Fig. 7.24).

A characteristic feature of the temple complexes is the chariot streets that extended from the temple *gopuram* in a straight line. These streets were paved with stone slabs and lined with pillared pavilions in which merchants set up their shops.

Just as the *nayakas* continued with and elaborated on traditions of fortification, so they did with traditions of temple building. In fact, some of the most spectacular *gopurams* were also built by the local *nayakas*.

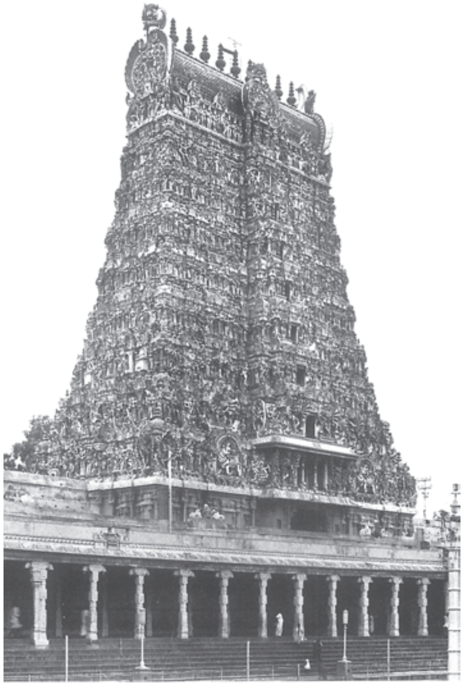


Fig. 7.26
A gopuram *built by the* nayakas *of Madurai*

➲ Discuss...

How and why did the rulers of Vijayanagara adopt and adapt earlier traditions of ritual architecture?

6. PLOTTING PALACES, TEMPLES AND BAZAARS

We have been examining a wealth of information on Vijayanagara – photographs, plans, elevations of structures and sculpture. How was all of this produced? After the initial surveys by Mackenzie, information was pieced together from travellers' accounts and inscriptions. Through the twentieth century, the site was preserved by the Archaeological Survey of India and the Karnataka Department of Archaeology and Museums. In 1976, Hampi was recognised as a site of national importance. Then, in the early 1980s, an important project was launched to document the material remains at Vijayanagara in detail, through extensive and intensive surveys, using a variety of recording techniques. Over nearly twenty years, dozens of scholars from all over the world worked to compile and preserve this information.

Let us look at just one part of this enormous exercise – mapping – in more detail. The first step was to divide the entire area into a set of 25 squares, each designated by a letter of the alphabet. Then, each of the small squares was subdivided into a set of even smaller squares. But this was not all: each of these smaller squares was further subdivided into yet smaller units.

As you can see, these detailed surveys have been extremely painstaking, and have recovered and documented traces of thousands of structures – from tiny shrines and residences to elaborate temples. They have also led to the recovery of traces of roads, paths, bazaars, etc.

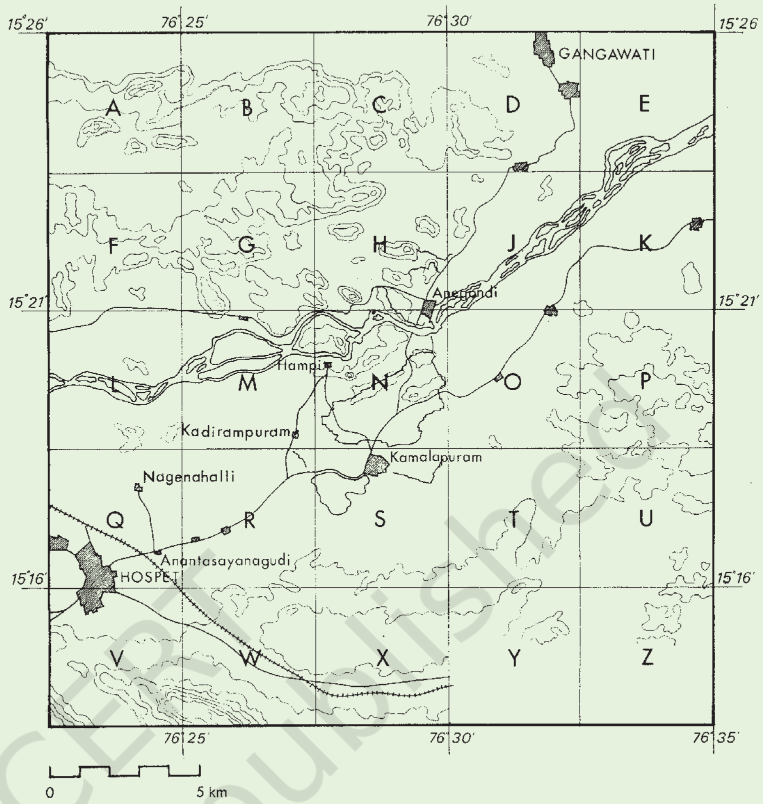

15°26′
76°25′
76°30′
15°26′
GANGAWATI
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
J
K
15°21′
Anegondi
15°21′
L
M
Hampi
N
O
P
Kadirampuram
Kamalapuram
Nagenahalli
Q
R
S
T
U
Anantasayanagudi
HOSPET
15°16′
15°16′
V
W
X
Y
Z
76°25′
76°30′
76°35′
0
5 km

Fig. 7.27
A detailed map of the site (top right)

➲ Which is the letter of the alphabet that was not used? Using the scale in the map, measure the length of any one of the small squares.

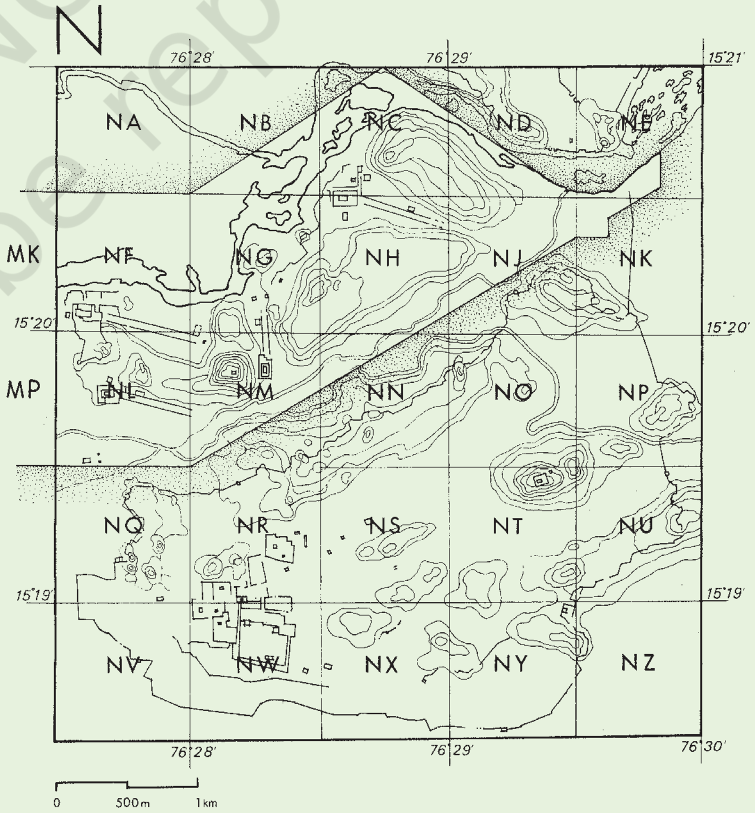

N
76°28′
76°29′
15°21′
NA
NB
NC
ND
NE
MK
NF
NG
NH
NJ
NK
15°20′
15°20′
MP
NL
NM
NN
NO
NP
NQ
NR
NS
NT
NU
15°19′
15°19′
NV
NW
NX
NY
NZ
76°28′
76°29′
76°30′
0
500m
1 km

Fig. 7.28
Square N of Fig. 7.27 (right)

➲ What is the scale used on this map?

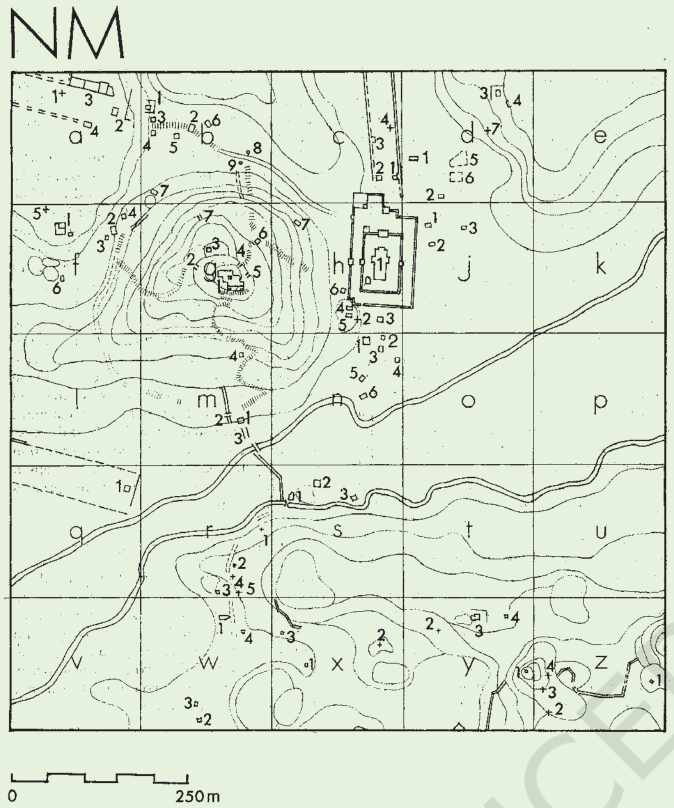


Fig. 7.29
Square NM of Fig. 7.28

➲ Identify a temple.
Look for walls, a central shrine, and traces of paths leading to the temple. Name the squares on the map which contain the plan of the temple.

The latter have been located through finds of pillar bases and platforms – all that remain of thriving markets.

It is worth remembering something that John M. Fritz, George Michell and M.S. Nagaraja Rao, who worked for years at the site, wrote: “In our study of these monuments of Vijayanagara we have to imagine a whole series of vanished wooden elements – columns, brackets, beams, ceilings, overhanging eaves, and towers – decorated with plaster and painted, perhaps brightly.”

Although wooden structures are lost, and only stone structures survive, the descriptions left by travellers allow us to reconstruct some aspects of the vibrant life of the times.

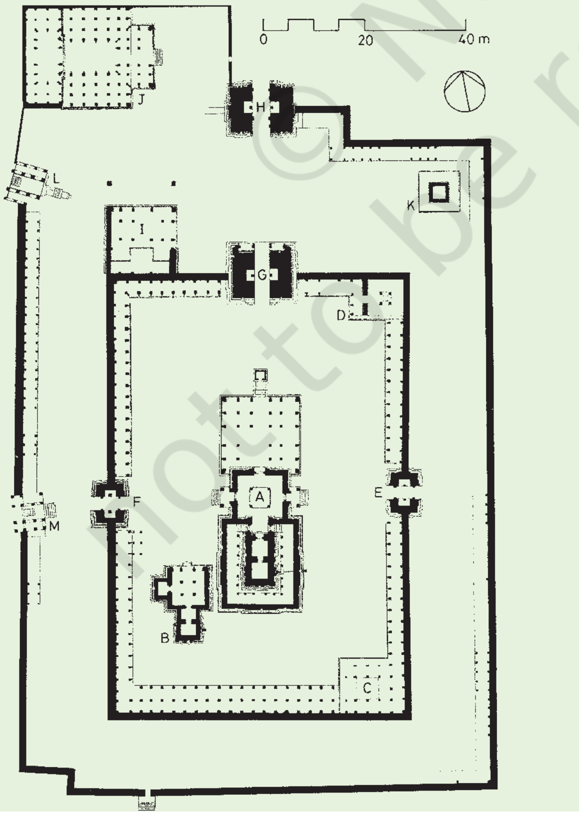


Fig. 7.30
Plan of the temple in Fig 7.29

➲ Identify the *gopuram*, halls, colonnades and central shrine. Which areas would you pass through to reach the central shrine from the outer entrance?

Source 5

The bazaar

Paes gives a vivid description of the bazaar:

> Going forward, you have a broad and beautiful street … In this street live many merchants, and there you will find all sorts of rubies, and diamonds, and emeralds, and pearls, and seed-pearls, and cloths, and every other sort of thing there is on earth and that you may wish to buy. Then you have there every evening a fair where they sell many common horses and nags, and also many citrons, and limes, and oranges, and grapes, and every other kind of garden stuff, and wood; you have all in this street.

More generally, he described the city as being "the best-provided city in the world" with the markets "stocked with provisions such as rice, wheat, grains, India corn and a certain amount of barley and beans, moong, pulses and horse-gram" all of which were cheaply and abundantly available. According to Fernao Nuniz, the Vijayanagara markets were "overflowing with abundance of fruits, grapes and oranges, limes, pomegranates, jackfruit and mangoes and all very cheap". Meat too was sold in abundance in the marketplaces. Nuniz describes "mutton, pork, venison, partridges, hares, doves, quail and all kinds of birds, sparrows, rats and cats and lizards" as being sold in the market of Bisnaga (Vijayanagara).

7. QUESTIONS IN SEARCH OF ANSWERS

Buildings that survive tell us about the way spaces were organised and used, how they were built, with what materials and techniques. For example, we can assess the defence requirements and military preparedness of a city by studying its fortifications. Buildings also tell us about the spread of ideas and cultural influences if we compare them with buildings in other places. They convey ideas which the builders or their patrons wished to project. They are often suffused with symbols which are a product of their cultural context. These we can understand when we combine information from other sources like literature, inscriptions and popular traditions.

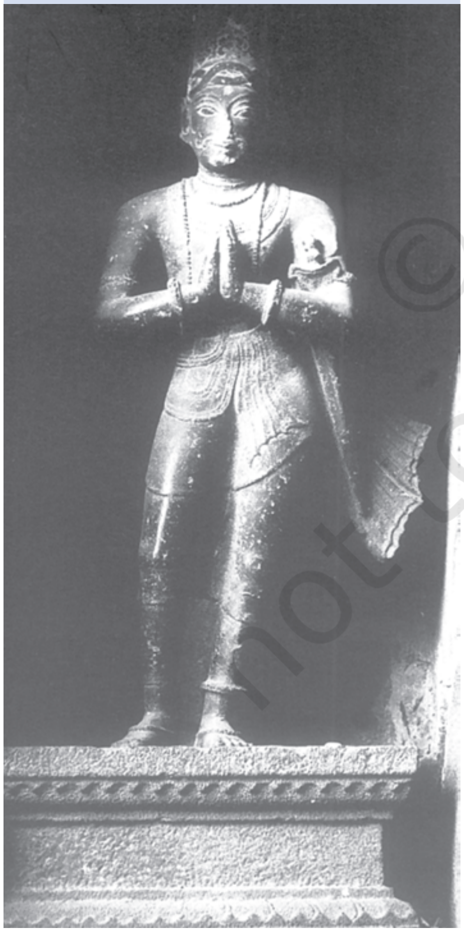
Krishnadeva Raya

To recapitulate about some of the problems of perspective, look at this beautiful statue of Krishnadeva Raya placed on the *gopuram* of the temple at Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu. This is obviously the way in which the ruler wanted to project himself.

And this is how Paes describes the king:

> Of medium height, and of fair complexion and good figure, rather fat than thin; he has on his face signs of smallpox.

Fig. 7.31



Investigations of architectural features do not tell us what ordinary men, women and children, comprising the vast majority of the people who lived in the city and its outskirts, thought about these impressive buildings. Would they have had access to any of the areas within the royal centre or the sacred centre? Would they hurry past the sculpture, or would they pause to see, reflect and try and understand its complicated symbolism? And what did the people who worked on these colossal construction projects think of the enterprises to which they had contributed their labour?

While rulers took all important decisions about the buildings to be constructed, the site, the material to be used and the style to be followed, who possessed the specialised knowledge required for such enormous enterprises? Who drew up the plans for the buildings? Where did the masons, stonecutters, sculptors who did the actual building come from? Were they captured during war from neighbouring regions? What kind of wages did they get? Who supervised the building activity? How was building material transported and where did it come from? These are some of the questions that we cannot answer by merely looking at the buildings or their remains. Continuing research using other sources might provide some further clues.

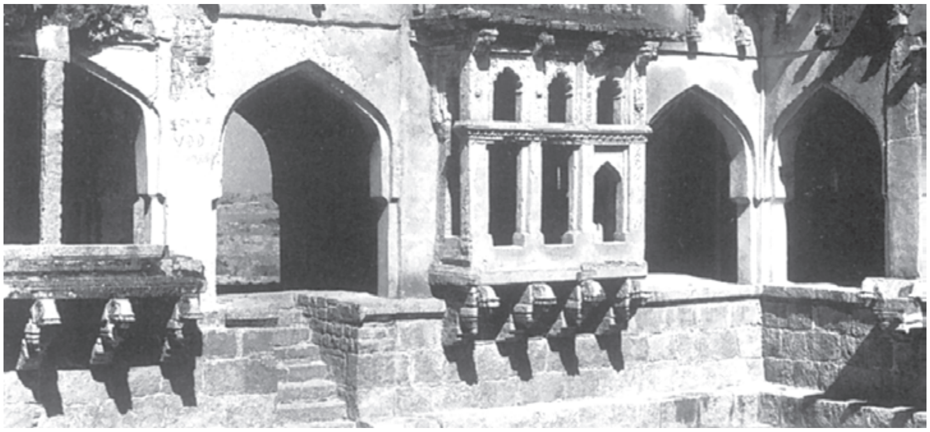


Fig. 7.32
Part of a structure known as the queen's bath

TIMELINE 1
MAJOR POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

c.1200-1300	Establishment of the Delhi Sultanate (1206)
c.1300-1400	Establishment of the Vijayanagara Empire (1336?); establishment of the Bahmani kingdom (1347); Sultanates in Jaunpur, Kashmir and Madura
c.1400-1500	Establishment of the Gajapati kingdom of Orissa (1435); Establishment of the Sultanates of Gujarat and Malwa; Emergence of the Sultanates of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Berar (1490)
c.1500-1600	Conquest of Goa by the Portuguese (1510); Collapse of the Bahmani kingdom, emergence of the Sultanate of Golconda (1518); Establishment of the Mughal empire by Babur (1526)

Note: Question mark indicates uncertain date.

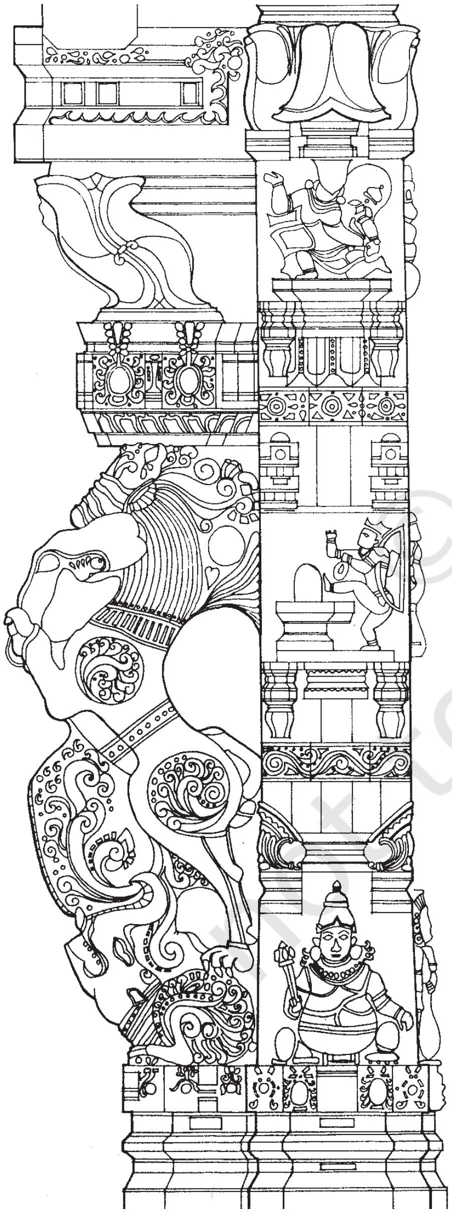
TIMELINE 2
LANDMARKS IN THE DISCOVERY AND CONSERVATION OF VIJAYANAGARA

1800	Colin Mackenzie visits Vijayanagara
1856	Alexander Greenlaw takes the first detailed photographs of archaeological remains at Hampi
1876	J.F. Fleet begins documenting the inscriptions on the temple walls at the site
1902	Conservation begins under John Marshall
1986	Hampi declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO

ANSWER IN 100-150 WORDS

1. What have been the methods used to study the ruins of Hampi over the last two centuries? In what way do you think they would have complemented the information provided by the priests of the Virupaksha temple?
2. How were the water requirements of Vijayanagara met?
3. What do you think were the advantages and disadvantages of enclosing agricultural land within the fortified area of the city?
4. What do you think was the significance of the rituals associated with the *mahanavami dibba*?
5. Fig. 7.33 is an illustration of another pillar from the Virupaksha temple. Do you notice any floral motifs? What are the animals shown? Why do you think they are depicted? Describe the human figures shown.

Fig. 7.33



WRITE A SHORT ESSAY (ABOUT 250-300 WORDS) ON THE FOLLOWING:

6. Discuss whether the term "royal centre" is an appropriate description for the part of the city for which it is used.
7. What does the architecture of buildings like the Lotus Mahal and elephant stables tell us about the rulers who commissioned them?
8. What are the architectural traditions that inspired the architects of Vijayanagara? How did they transform these traditions?
9. What impression of the lives of the ordinary people of Vijayanagara can you cull from the various descriptions in the chapter?

MAP WORK

10. On an outline map of the world, mark approximately Italy, Portugal, Iran and Russia. Trace the routes the travellers mentioned on p.176 would have taken to reach Vijayanagara.

PROJECT (CHOOSE ONE)

11. Find out more about any one of the major cities which flourished in the subcontinent during *c.* fourteenth-seventeenth centuries. Describe the architecture of the city. Are there any features to suggest that these were political centres? Are there buildings that were ritually significant? Is there an area for commercial activities? What are the features that distinguish the urban layout from that of surrounding areas?

12. Visit a religious building in your neighbourhood. Describe, with sketches, its roof, pillars and arches if any, corridors, passages, halls, entrance, water supply, etc. Compare these features with those of the Virupaksha temple. Describe what each part of the building is used for. Find out about its history.

If you would like to know more, read:

Vasundhara Filliozat. 2006 (rpt).
Vijayanagara.
National Book Trust,
New Delhi.

George Michell. 1995.
Architecture and Art of Southern India.
Cambridge University Press,
Cambridge.

K.A. Nilakanta Sastri. 1955.
A History of South India.
Oxford University Press,
New Delhi.

Burton Stein. 1989.
Vijayanagara (The New Cambridge History of India Vol.1, Part 2).
Foundation Books, New Delhi.

For more information, you could visit:
http://www.museum.upenn.edu/new/research/Exp_Rese_Disc/Asia/vrp/HTML/Vijay_Hist.shtml

12094CH08

THEME
EIGHT

PEASANTS, ZAMINDARS AND THE STATE

AGRARIAN SOCIETY AND THE MUGHAL EMPIRE (*C.* SIXTEENTH-SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES)

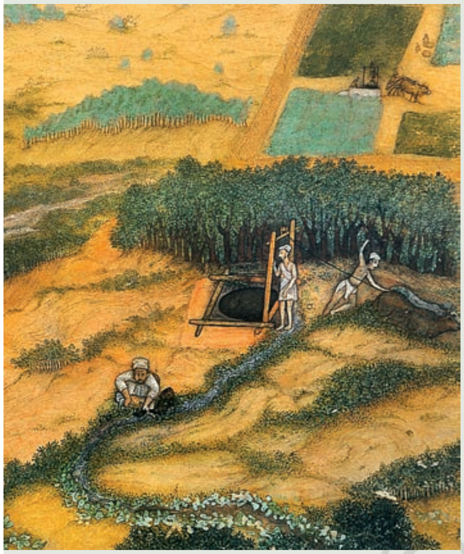


Fig. 8.1
A rural scene
Detail from a seventeenth-century Mughal painting

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries about 85 per cent of the population of India lived in its villages. Both peasants and landed elites were involved in agricultural production and claimed rights to a share of the produce. This created relationships of cooperation, competition and conflict among them. The sum of these *agrarian* relationships made up rural society.

At the same time agencies from outside also entered into the rural world. Most important among these was the Mughal state, which derived the bulk of its income from agricultural production. Agents of the state – revenue assessors, collectors, record keepers – sought to control rural society so as to ensure that cultivation took place and the state got its regular share of taxes from the produce. Since many crops were grown for sale, trade, money and markets entered the villages and linked the agricultural areas with the towns.

1. PEASANTS AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

The basic unit of agricultural society was the village, inhabited by peasants who performed the manifold seasonal tasks that made up agricultural production throughout the year – tilling the soil, sowing seeds, harvesting the crop when it was ripe. Further, they contributed their labour to the production of agro-based goods such as sugar and oil.

But rural India was not characterised by settled peasant production alone. Several kinds of areas such as large tracts of dry land or hilly regions were not cultivable in the same way as the more fertile expanses of land. In addition, forest areas made up a substantial proportion of territory. We need to keep this varied topography in mind when discussing agrarian society.

1.1 Looking for sources

Our understanding of the workings of rural society does not come from those who worked the land, as peasants did not write about themselves. Our major source for the agrarian history of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are chronicles and documents from the Mughal court (see also Chapter 9).

One of the most important chronicles was the *Ain-i Akbari* (in short the *Ain*, see also Section 8) authored by Akbar's court historian Abu'l Fazl. This text meticulously recorded the arrangements made by the state to ensure cultivation, to enable the collection of revenue by the agencies of the state and to regulate the relationship between the state and rural magnates, the zamindars.

The central purpose of the *Ain* was to present a vision of Akbar's empire where social harmony was provided by a strong ruling class. Any revolt or assertion of autonomous power against the Mughal state was, in the eyes of the author of the *Ain*, predestined to fail. In other words, whatever we learn from the *Ain* about peasants remains a view from the top.

Fortunately, however, the account of the *Ain* can be supplemented by descriptions contained in sources emanating from regions away from the Mughal capital. These include detailed revenue records from Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Further, the extensive records of the East India Company (see also Chapter 10) provide us with useful descriptions of agrarian relations in eastern India. All these sources record instances of conflicts between peasants, zamindars and the state. In the process they give us an insight into peasants' perception of and their expectations of fairness from the state.

1.2 Peasants and their lands

The term which Indo-Persian sources of the Mughal period most frequently used to denote a peasant was *raiyat* (plural, *riaya*) or *muzarian*. In addition, we also encounter the terms *kisan* or *asami*. Sources of the seventeenth century refer to two kinds of peasants – *khud-kashta* and *pahi-kashta*. The former were residents of the village in which they held their lands. The latter were non-resident cultivators who belonged to some other village, but cultivated lands elsewhere on a contractual basis. People became *pahi-kashta* either out of choice – for example, when terms of revenue in a distant village were more favourable – or out of compulsion – for example, forced by economic distress after a famine.

Seldom did the average peasant of north India possess more than a pair of bullocks and two ploughs; most possessed even less. In Gujarat peasants possessing about six acres of land were considered to be affluent; in Bengal, on the other hand, five acres was the upper limit of an average peasant farm; 10 acres would make one a rich *asami.* Cultivation was based on the principle of individual ownership. Peasant lands were bought and sold in the same way as the lands of other property owners.

This nineteenth-century description of peasant holdings in the Delhi-Agra region would apply equally to the seventeenth century:

> The cultivating peasants (*asamis*), who plough up the fields, mark the limits of each field, for identification and demarcation, with borders of (raised) earth, brick and thorn so that *thousands of such fields* may be counted in a village.

Source 1

Peasants on the move

This was a feature of agrarian society which struck a keen observer like Babur, the first Mughal emperor, forcefully enough for him to write about it in the *Babur Nama*, his memoirs:

> In Hindustan hamlets and villages, towns indeed, are depopulated and set up in a moment! If the people of a large town, one inhabited for years even, flee from it, they do it in such a way that not a sign or trace of them remains in a day and a half. On the other hand, if they fix their eyes on a place to settle, they need not dig water courses because their crops are all rain-grown, and as the population of Hindustan is unlimited it swarms in. They make a tank or a well; they need not build houses or set up walls … *khas*-grass abounds, wood is unlimited, huts are made, and straightaway there is a village or a town!

➲ Describe the aspects of agricultural life that struck Babur as particular to regions in northern India.

1.3 Irrigation and technology

The abundance of land, available labour and the mobility of peasants were three factors that accounted for the constant expansion of agriculture. Since the primary purpose of agriculture is to feed people, basic staples such as rice, wheat or millets were the most frequently cultivated crops. Areas which received 40 inches or more of rainfall a year were generally rice-producing zones, followed by wheat and millets, corresponding to a descending scale of precipitation.

Monsoons remained the backbone of Indian agriculture, as they are even today. But there were crops which required additional water. Artificial systems of irrigation had to be devised for this.

Source 2

Irrigating trees and fields

This is an excerpt from the *Babur Nama* that describes the irrigation devices the emperor observed in northern India:

> The greater part of Hindustan country is situated on level land. Many though its towns and cultivated lands are, it nowhere has running waters … For … water is not at all a necessity in cultivating crops and orchards. Autumn crops grow by the downpour of the rains themselves; and strange it is that spring crops grow even when no rains fall. (However) to young trees water is made to flow by means of buckets or wheels …
>
> In Lahore, Dipalpur (both in present-day Pakistan) and those other parts, people water by means of a wheel. They make two circles of rope long enough to suit the depths of the well, fix strips of wood between them, and on these fasten pitchers. The ropes with the wood and attached pitchers are put over the wheel-well. At one end of the wheel-axle a second wheel is fixed, and close to it another on an upright axle. The last wheel the bullock turns; its teeth catch in the teeth of the second (wheel), and thus the wheel with the pitchers is turned. A trough is set where the water empties from the pitchers and from this the water is conveyed everywhere.
>
> In Agra, Chandwar, Bayana (all in present-day Uttar Pradesh) and those parts again, people water with a bucket … At the well-edge they set up a fork of wood, having a roller adjusted between the forks, tie a rope to a large bucket, put the rope over a roller, and tie its other end to the bullock. One person must drive the bullock, another empty the bucket.

➲ Compare the irrigation devices observed by Babur with what you have learnt about irrigation in Vijayanagara (Chapter 7). What kind of resources would each of these systems require? Which systems could ensure the participation of peasants in improving agricultural technology?

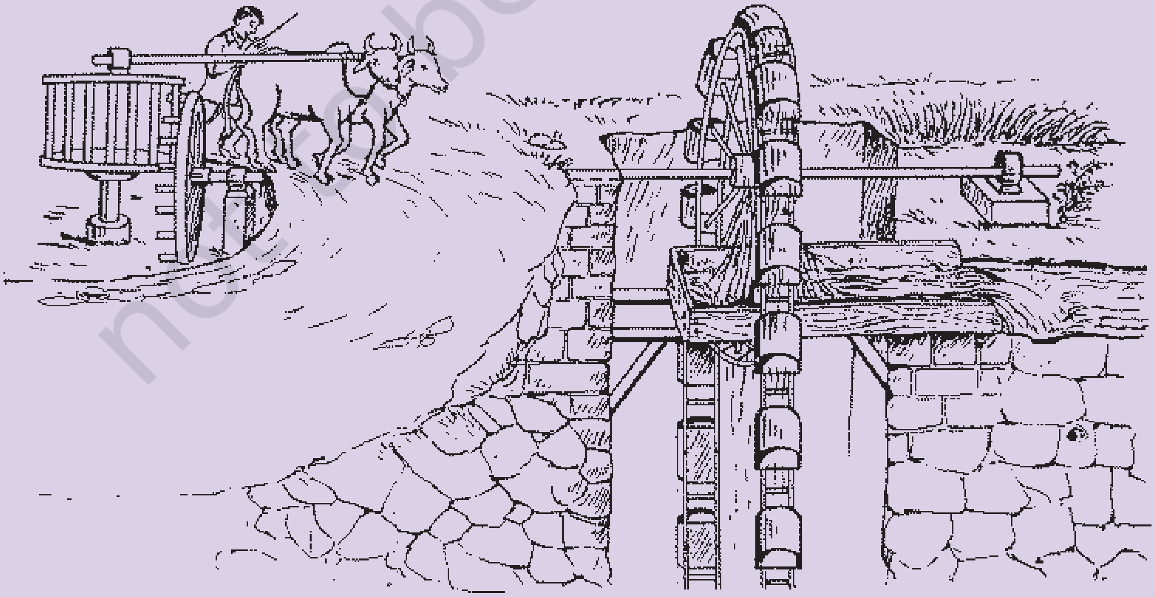


Fig. 8.2
A reconstructed Persian wheel, described here

The spread of tobacco

This plant, which arrived first in the Deccan, spread to northern India in the early years of the seventeenth century. The *Ain* does not mention tobacco in the lists of crops in northern India. Akbar and his nobles came across tobacco for the first time in 1604. At this time smoking tobacco (in *hookahs* or *chillums*) seems to have caught on in a big way. Jahangir was so concerned about its addiction that he banned it. This was totally ineffective because by the end of the seventeenth century, tobacco had become a major article of consumption, cultivation and trade all over India.

Agricultural prosperity and population growth

One important outcome of such varied and flexible forms of agricultural production was a slow demographic growth. Despite periodic disruptions caused by famines and epidemics, India's population increased, according to calculations by economic historians, by about 50 million people between 1600 and 1800, which is an increase of about 33 per cent over 200 years.

Irrigation projects received state support as well. For example, in northern India the state undertook digging of new canals (*nahr*, *nala*) and also repaired old ones like the *shahnahr* in the Punjab during Shah Jahan's reign.

Though agriculture was labour intensive, peasants did use technologies that often harnessed cattle energy. One example was the wooden plough, which was light and easily assembled with an iron tip or coulter. It therefore did not make deep furrows, which preserved the moisture better during the intensely hot months. A drill, pulled by a pair of giant oxen, was used to plant seeds, but broadcasting of seed was the most prevalent method. Hoeing and weeding were done simultaneously using a narrow iron blade with a small wooden handle.

1.4 An abundance of crops

Agriculture was organised around two major seasonal cycles, the *kharif* (autumn) and the *rabi* (spring). This would mean that most regions, except those terrains that were the most arid or inhospitable, produced a minimum of two crops a year (*do-fasla*), whereas some, where rainfall or irrigation assured a continuous supply of water, even gave three crops. This ensured an enormous variety of produce. For instance, we are told in the *Ain* that the Mughal provinces of Agra produced 39 varieties of crops and Delhi produced 43 over the two seasons. Bengal produced 50 varieties of rice alone.

However, the focus on the cultivation of basic staples did not mean that agriculture in medieval India was only for subsistence. We often come across the term *jins-i kamil* (literally, perfect crops) in our sources. The Mughal state also encouraged peasants to cultivate such crops as they brought in more revenue. Crops such as cotton and sugarcane were *jins-i kamil* par excellence. Cotton was grown over a great swathe of territory spread over central India and the Deccan plateau, whereas Bengal was famous for its sugar. Such cash crops would also include various sorts of oilseeds (for example, mustard) and lentils. This shows how subsistence and commercial production were closely intertwined in an average peasant's holding.

During the seventeenth century several new crops from different parts of the world reached the Indian subcontinent. Maize (*makka*), for example, was introduced into India via Africa and Spain and by the seventeenth century it was being listed as one of the major crops of western India. Vegetables like tomatoes, potatoes and chillies were introduced from the New World at this time, as were fruits like the pineapple and the papaya.

➲ Discuss...
Identify the technologies and agricultural practices described in this section that appear similar to or different from those described in Chapter 2.

2. THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY

The above account makes it clear that agricultural production involved the intensive participation and initiative of the peasantry. How did this affect the structure of agrarian relations in Mughal society? To find out, let us look at the social groups involved in agricultural expansion, and at their relationships and conflicts.

We have seen that peasants held their lands in individual ownership. At the same time they belonged to a collective village community as far as many aspects of their social existence were concerned. There were three constituents of this community – the cultivators, the panchayat, and the village headman (*muqaddam* or *mandal).*

2.1 Caste and the rural milieu

Deep inequities on the basis of caste and other caste-like distinctions meant that the cultivators were a highly heterogeneous group. Among those who tilled the land, there was a sizeable number who worked as menials or agricultural labourers (*majur*).

Despite the abundance of cultivable land, certain caste groups were assigned menial tasks and thus relegated to poverty. Though there was no census at that time, the little data that we have suggest that such groups comprised a large section of the village population, had the least resources and were constrained by their position in the caste hierarchy, much like the Dalits of modern India. Such distinctions had begun permeating into other

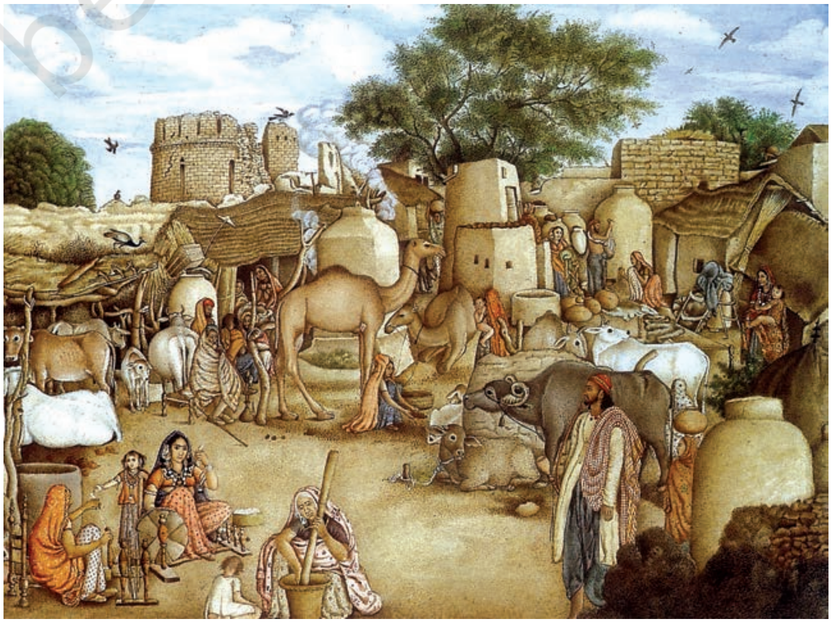


Fig. 8.3
An early nineteenth-century painting depicting a village in the Punjab

➲ Describe what women and men are shown doing in the illustration as well as the architecture of the village.

communities too. In Muslim communities menials like the *halalkhoran* (scavengers) were housed outside the boundaries of the village; similarly the *mallahzadas* (literally, sons of boatmen) in Bihar were comparable to slaves.

There was a direct correlation between caste, poverty and social status at the lower strata of society. Such correlations were not so marked at intermediate levels. In a manual from seventeenth-century Marwar, Rajputs are mentioned as peasants, sharing the same space with Jats, who were accorded a lower status in the caste hierarchy. The Gauravas, who cultivated land around Vrindavan (Uttar Pradesh), sought Rajput status in the seventeenth century. Castes such as the Ahirs, Gujars and Malis rose in the hierarchy because of the profitability of cattle rearing and horticulture. In the eastern regions, intermediate pastoral and fishing castes like the Sadgops and Kaivartas acquired the status of peasants.

2.2 Panchayats and headmen

The village panchayat was an assembly of elders, usually important people of the village with hereditary rights over their property. In mixed-caste villages, the panchayat was usually a heterogeneous body. An oligarchy, the panchayat represented various castes and communities in the village, though the village menial-cum-agricultural worker was unlikely to be represented there. The decisions made by these panchayats were binding on the members.

The panchayat was headed by a headman known as *muqaddam* or *mandal.* Some sources suggest that the headman was chosen through the consensus of the village elders, and that this choice had to be ratified by the zamindar. Headmen held office as long as they enjoyed the confidence of the village elders, failing which they could be dismissed by them. The chief function of the headman was to supervise the preparation of village accounts, assisted by the accountant or *patwari* of the panchayat.

The panchayat derived its funds from contributions made by individuals to a common financial pool. These funds were used for defraying the costs of entertaining revenue officials who visited the village from time to time. Expenses for community welfare activities such as tiding over

Corrupt *mandals*

The *mandals* often misused their positions. They were principally accused of defrauding village accounts in connivance with the *patwari*, and for underassessing the revenue they owed from their own lands in order to pass the additional burden on to the smaller cultivator.

natural calamities (like floods), were also met from these funds. Often these funds were also deployed in construction of a bund or digging a canal which peasants usually could not afford to do on their own.

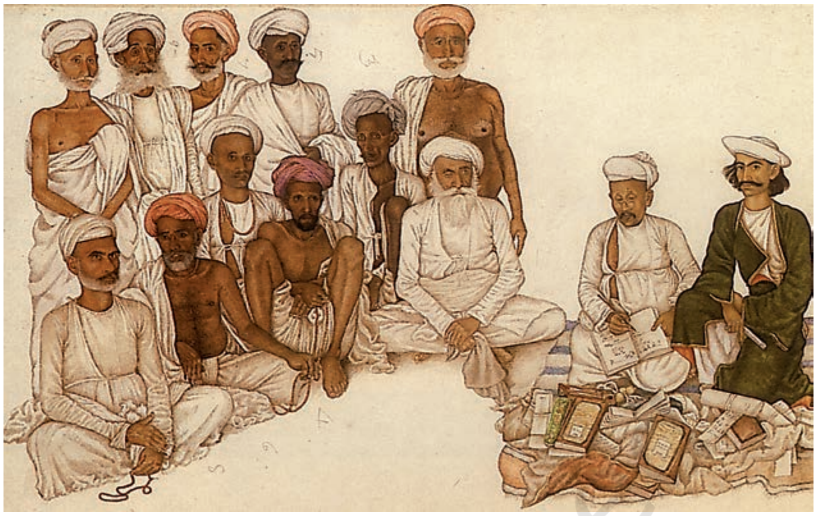


Fig. 8.4
An early nineteenth-century painting depicting a meeting of village elders and tax collectors

➲ How has the artist differentiated between the village elders and the tax collectors?

One important function of the *panchayat* was to ensure that caste boundaries among the various communities inhabiting the village were upheld. In eastern India all marriages were held in the presence of the *mandal*. In other words one of the duties of the village headman was to oversee the conduct of the members of the village community "chiefly to prevent any offence against their caste".

Panchayats also had the authority to levy fines and inflict more serious forms of punishment like expulsion from the community. The latter was a drastic step and was in most cases meted out for a limited period. It meant that a person forced to leave the village became an outcaste and lost his right to practise his profession. Such a measure was intended as a deterrent to violation of caste norms.

In addition to the village panchayat each caste or jati in the village had its own jati panchayat. These panchayats wielded considerable power in rural society. In Rajasthan jati panchayats arbitrated civil disputes between members of different castes. They mediated in contested claims on land, decided whether marriages were performed according to the norms laid down by a particular caste group, determined who had ritual precedence in village functions, and so on. In most cases, except in matters of criminal justice, the state respected the decisions of jati panchayats.

Archival records from western India – notably Rajasthan and Maharashtra – contain petitions presented to the panchayat complaining about extortionate taxation or the demand for unpaid labour (*begar*) imposed by the "superior" castes or officials of the state. These petitions were usually made by villagers, from the lowest rungs of rural society. Often petitions were made collectively as well, by a caste group or a community protesting against what they considered were morally illegitimate demands on the part of elite groups. These included excessive tax demands which, especially in times of drought or other disasters, endangered the peasants' subsistence. In the eyes of the petitioners the right to the basic minimum for survival was sanctioned by custom. They regarded the village panchayat as the court of appeal that would ensure that the state carried out its moral obligations and guaranteed justice.

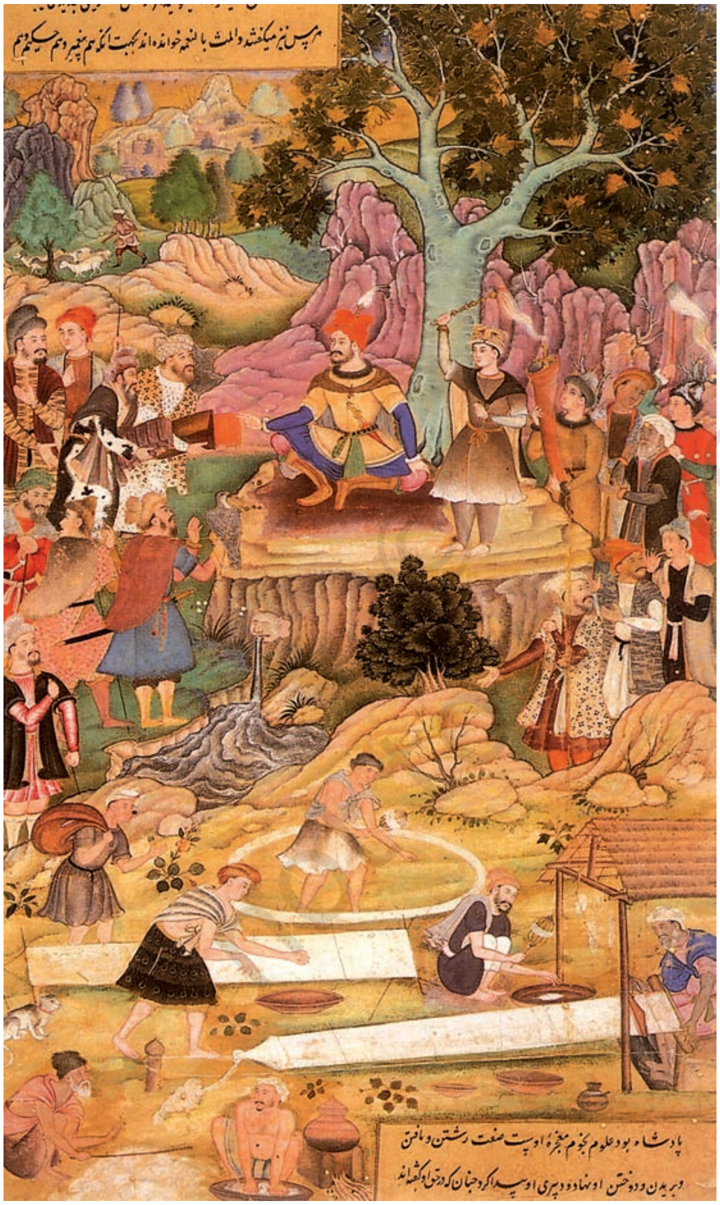


Fig. 8.5
A seventeenth-century painting depicting textile production

➲ Describe the activities that are shown in the illustration.

The decision of the panchayat in conflicts between "lower-caste" peasants and state officials or the local zamindar could vary from case to case. In cases of excessive revenue demands, the panchayat often suggested compromise. In cases where reconciliation failed, peasants took recourse to more drastic forms of resistance, such as deserting the village. The relatively easy availability of uncultivated land and the competition over labour resources made this an effective weapon in the hands of cultivators.

2.3 Village artisans

Another interesting aspect of the village was the elaborate relationship of exchange between different producers. Marathi documents and village surveys made in the early years of British rule have revealed the existence of substantial numbers of artisans, sometimes as high as 25 per cent of the total households in the villages.

At times, however, the distinction between artisans and peasants in village society was a fluid one, as many groups performed the tasks of both. Cultivators and their families would also participate in craft production – such as dyeing, textile printing, baking and firing of pottery, making and repairing agricultural implements. Phases in the agricultural calendar when there was a relative lull in activity, as between sowing and weeding or between weeding and harvesting, were a time when cultivators could engage in artisanal production.

Village artisans – potters, blacksmiths, carpenters, barbers, even goldsmiths – provided specialised services in return for which they were compensated by villagers by a variety of means. The most common way of doing so was by giving them a share of the harvest, or an allotment of land, perhaps cultivable wastes, which was likely to be decided by the panchayat. In Maharashtra such lands became the artisans' *miras* or *watan* – their hereditary holding.

Another variant of this was a system where artisans and individual peasant households entered into a mutually negotiated system of remuneration, most of the time goods for services. For example, eighteenth-century records tell us of zamindars in Bengal who remunerated blacksmiths, carpenters, even goldsmiths for their work by paying them "a small daily allowance and diet money". This later came to be described as the *jajmani* system, though the term was not in vogue in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such evidence is interesting because it indicates the intricate ways in which exchange networks operated at the micro-level of the village. Cash remuneration was not entirely unknown either.

2.4 A "little republic"?

How does one understand the significance of the village community? Some British officials in the nineteenth century saw the village as a "little republic" made up of fraternal partners sharing resources and labour in a collective. However, this was not a sign of rural egalitarianism. There was individual ownership of assets and deep inequities based on caste and gender distinctions. A group of powerful individuals decided the affairs of the village, exploited the weaker sections and had the authority to dispense justice.

More importantly, a cash nexus had already developed through trade between villages and towns. In the Mughal heartland too, revenue was assessed and collected in cash. Artisans producing for the export market (for example, weavers) received their

Money in the village

The seventeenth-century French traveller Jean-Baptiste Tavernier found it remarkable that in "India a village must be very small indeed if it has not a money-changer called a Shroff. (They) act as bankers to make remittances of money (and who) enhance the rupee as they please for paisa and the paisa for these (cowrie) shells".

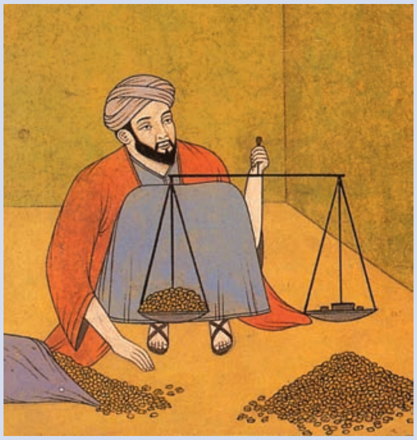


Fig. 8.6
A shroff at work

advances or wages in cash, as did producers of commercial products like cotton, silk or indigo.

➲ Discuss...

In what ways do you think the panchayats described in this section were similar to or different from present-day gram panchayats?

3. WOMEN IN AGRARIAN SOCIETY

As you may have observed in many different societies, the production process often involves men and women performing certain specified roles. In the contexts that we are exploring, women and men had to work shoulder to shoulder in the fields. Men tilled and ploughed, while women sowed, weeded, threshed and winnowed the harvest. With the growth of nucleated villages and expansion in individuated peasant farming, which characterised medieval Indian agriculture, the basis of production was the labour and resources of the entire household. Naturally, a gendered segregation between the home (for women) and the world (for men) was not possible in this context. Nonetheless biases related to women's biological functions did continue. Menstruating women, for instance, were not allowed to touch the plough or the potter's wheel in western India, or enter the groves where betel-leaves (*paan*) were grown in Bengal.

Artisanal tasks such as spinning yarn, sifting and kneading clay for pottery, and embroidery were among the many aspects of production dependent on female labour. The more commercialised the product, the greater the demand on women's labour to produce it. In fact, peasant and artisan women worked not only in the fields, but even went to the houses of their employers or to the markets if necessary.

Women were considered an important resource in agrarian society also because they were child bearers in a society dependent on labour. At the same time, high mortality rates among women – owing to malnutrition, frequent pregnancies, death during childbirth – often meant a shortage of wives. This led to the emergence of social customs in peasant and artisan communities that were distinct from

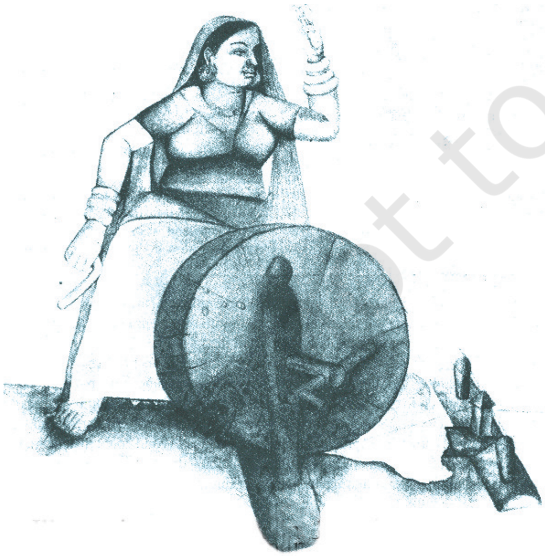


Fig. 8.7
A woman spinning thread

those prevalent among elite groups. Marriages in many rural communities required the payment of bride-price rather than dowry to the bride's family. Remarriage was considered legitimate both among divorced and widowed women.

The importance attached to women as a reproductive force also meant that the fear of losing control over them was great. According to established social norms, the household was headed by a male. Thus women were kept under strict control by the male members of the family and the community. They could inflict draconian punishments if they suspected infidelity on the part of women.

Documents from Western India – Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra – record petitions sent by women to the village panchayat, seeking redress and justice. Wives protested against the infidelity of their husbands or the neglect of the wife and children by the male head of the household, the *grihasthi*. While male infidelity was not always punished, the state and "superior" caste groups did intervene when it came to ensuring that the family was adequately provided for. In most cases when women petitioned to the panchayat, their names were excluded from the record: the petitioner was referred to as the mother, sister or wife of the male head of the household.

Amongst the landed gentry, women had the right to inherit property. Instances from the Punjab show that women, including widows, actively participated in the rural land market as sellers of property inherited by them. Hindu and Muslim women inherited zamindaris which they were free to sell or mortgage. Women zamindars were known in eighteenth-century Bengal. In fact, one of the biggest and most famous of the eighteenth-century zamindaris, that of Rajshahi, had a woman at the helm.

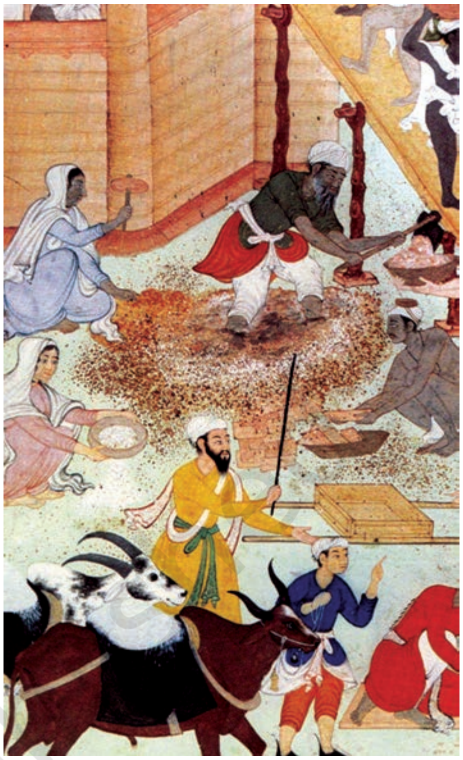


Fig. 8.8 a
The construction of Fatehpur Sikri – women crushing stones

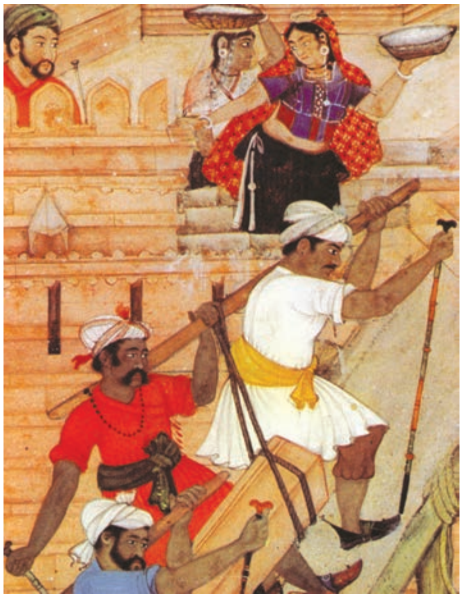


Fig. 8.8 b
Women carrying loads
Migrant women from neighbouring villages often worked at such construction sites.

➲ Discuss...

Are there any differences in the access men and women have to agricultural land in your state?

4. FORESTS AND TRIBES

4.1 Beyond settled villages

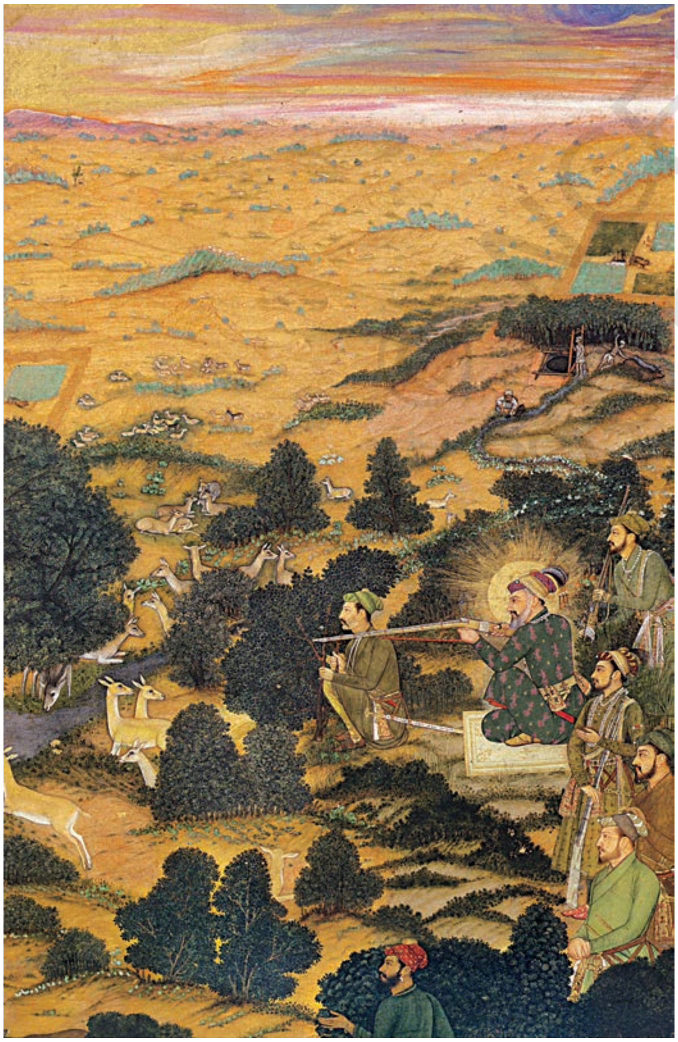
There was more to rural India than sedentary agriculture. Apart from the intensively cultivated provinces in northern and north-western India, huge swathes of forests – dense forest (*jangal*) or scrubland (*kharbandi*) – existed all over eastern India, central India, northern India (including the Terai on the Indo-Nepal border), Jharkhand, and in peninsular India down the Western Ghats and the Deccan plateau. Though it is nearly impossible to set an all-India average of the forest cover for this period, informed conjectures based on contemporary sources suggest an average of 40 per cent.

Forest dwellers were termed *jangli* in contemporary texts. Being *jangli*, however, did not mean an absence of "civilisation", as popular usage of the term today seems to connote. Rather, the term described those whose livelihood came from the gathering of forest produce, hunting and shifting agriculture. These activities were largely season specific. Among the Bhils, for example, spring was reserved for collecting forest produce, summer for fishing, the monsoon months for cultivation, and autumn and winter for hunting. Such a sequence presumed and perpetuated mobility, which was a distinctive feature of tribes inhabiting these forests.

For the state, the forest was a subversive place – a place of refuge (*mawas*) for troublemakers. Once again, we turn to Babur who says that jungles provided a good defence "behind which the people of the pargana become stubbornly rebellious and pay no taxes".

Fig. 8.9
Painting of Shah Jahan hunting nilgais (from the Badshah Nama*)*

➲ Describe what you see in this painting. What is the symbolic element that helps establish the connection between the hunt and ideal justice?



4.2 Inroads into forests

External forces entered the forest in different ways. For instance, the state required elephants for the army. So the *peshkash* levied from forest people often included a supply of elephants.

In the Mughal political ideology, the hunt symbolised the overwhelming concern of the state to relate to all its subjects, rich and poor. Regular hunting expeditions, so court historians tell us, enabled the emperor to travel across the extensive territories of his empire and personally attend to the grievances of its inhabitants. The hunt was a subject frequently painted by court artists. The painter resorted to the device of inserting a small scene somewhere in the picture that functioned as a symbol of a harmonious reign.

Pargana was an administrative subdivision of a Mughal province.

Peshkash was a form of tribute collected by the Mughal state.

Source 3

Clearance of forests for agricultural settlements

This is an excerpt from a sixteenth-century Bengali poem, *Chandimangala*, composed by Mukundaram Chakrabarti. The hero of the poem, Kalaketu, set up a kingdom by clearing forests:

Hearing the news, outsiders came from various lands.
Kalaketu then bought and distributed among them
Heavy knives, axes, battle-axes and pikes.
From the north came the Das (people)
One hundred of them advanced.
They were struck with wonder on seeing Kalaketu
Who distributed betel-nut to each of them.
From the south came the harvesters
Five hundred of them under one organiser.
From the west came Zafar Mian,
Together with twenty-two thousand men.
Sulaimani beads in their hands
They chanted the names of their *pir* and *paighambar* (Prophet).
Having cleared the forest
They established markets.
Hundreds and hundreds of foreigners
Ate and entered the forest.
Hearing the sound of the axe,
Tigers became apprehensive and ran away, roaring.

➲ What forms of intrusion into the forest does the text evoke? Compare its message with that of the miniature painting in Fig. 8.9. Who are the people identified as "foreigners" from the perspective of the forest dwellers?

Source 4

Trade between the hill tribes and the plains, *c.* 1595

This is how Abu'l Fazl describes the transactions between the hill tribes and the plains in the *suba* of Awadh (part of present-day Uttar Pradesh):

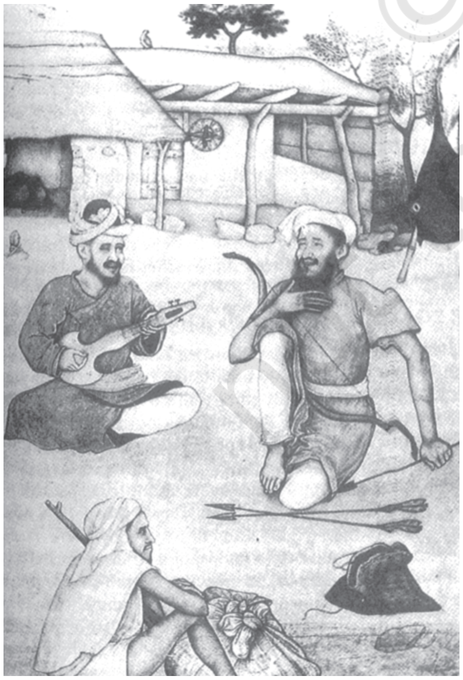
> From the northern mountains quantities of goods are carried on the backs of men, of stout ponies and of goats, such as gold, copper, lead, musk, tails of the *kutas* cow (the yak), honey, *chuk* (an acid composed of orange juice and lemon boiled together), pomegranate seed, ginger, long pepper, *majith* (a plant producing a red dye) root, borax, zedoary (a root resembling turmeric), wax, woollen stuffs, wooden ware, hawks, falcons, black falcons, merlins (a kind of bird), and other articles. In exchange they carry back white and coloured cloths, amber, salt, asafoetida, ornaments, glass and earthen ware.

➲ What are the modes of transport described in this passage? Why do you think they were used? Explain what each of the articles brought from the plains to the hills may have been used for.

The spread of commercial agriculture was an important external factor that impinged on the lives of those who lived in the forests. Forest products – like honey, beeswax and gum lac – were in great demand. Some, such as gum lac, became major items of overseas export from India in the seventeenth century. Elephants were also captured and sold. Trade involved an exchange of commodities through barter as well. Some tribes, like the Lohanis in the Punjab, were engaged in overland trade, between India and Afghanistan, and in the town-country trade in the Punjab itself.

Social factors too wrought changes in the lives of forest dwellers. Like the "big men" of the village community, tribes also had their chieftains. Many tribal chiefs had become zamindars, some even became kings. For this they required to build up an army. They recruited people from their lineage groups or demanded that their fraternity provide military service. Tribes in the Sind region had armies comprising 6,000 cavalry and 7,000 infantry. In Assam, the Ahom kings had their *paiks*, people who were obliged to render military service in exchange for land. The capture of wild elephants was declared a royal monopoly by the Ahom kings.

Fig. 8.10
A peasant and a hunter listening to a sufi singer



Though the transition from a tribal to a monarchical system had started much earlier, the process seems to have become fully developed only by the sixteenth century. This can be seen from the *Ain's* observations on the existence of tribal kingdoms in the north-east. War was a common occurrence. For instance, the Koch kings fought and subjugated a number of neighbouring tribes in a long sequence of wars through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

New cultural influences also began to penetrate into forested zones. Some historians have indeed suggested that sufi saints (*pirs*) played a major role in the slow acceptance of Islam among agricultural communities emerging in newly colonised places (see also Chapter 6).

➲ Discuss...

Find out which areas are currently identified as forest zones in your state. Is life in these areas changing today? Are the factors responsible for these changes different from or identical to those mentioned in this section?

5. THE ZAMINDARS

Our story of agrarian relations in Mughal India will not be complete without referring to a class of people in the countryside that lived off agriculture but did not participate directly in the processes of agricultural production. These were the zamindars who were landed proprietors who also enjoyed certain social and economic privileges by virtue of their superior status in rural society. Caste was one factor that accounted for the elevated status of zamindars; another factor was that they performed certain services (*khidmat*) for the state.

The zamindars held extensive personal lands termed *milkiyat*, meaning property. *Milkiyat* lands were cultivated for the private use of zamindars, often with the help of hired or servile labour. The zamindars could sell, bequeath or mortgage these lands at will.

Zamindars also derived their power from the fact that they could often collect revenue on behalf of the state, a service for which they were compensated financially. Control over military resources was another source of power. Most zamindars had fortresses (*qilachas*) as well as an armed contingent comprising units of cavalry, artillery and infantry.

Thus if we visualise social relations in the Mughal countryside as a pyramid, zamindars clearly constituted its very narrow apex. Abu'l Fazl's account indicates that an "upper-caste", Brahmana-Rajput combine had already established firm control over rural society. It also reflects a fairly large representation from the so-called intermediate castes, as we saw earlier, as well as a liberal sprinkling of Muslim zamindaris.

Contemporary documents give an impression that conquest may have been the source of the origin of some zamindaris. The dispossession of weaker people by a powerful military chieftain was quite often a way of expanding a zamindari. It is, however, unlikely that the state would have allowed such a show of aggression by a zamindar unless he had been confirmed by an imperial order (*sanad*).

More important were the slow processes of zamindari consolidation, which are also documented in sources. These involved colonisation of new lands, by transfer of rights, by order of the state and by purchase. These were the processes which perhaps permitted people belonging to the relatively "lower" castes to enter the rank of zamindars as zamindaris were bought and sold quite briskly in this period.

A combination of factors also allowed the consolidation of clan- or lineage-based zamindaris. For example, the Rajputs and Jats adopted these strategies to consolidate their control over vast swathes of territory in northern India. Likewise, peasant-pastoralists (like the Sadgops) carved out powerful zamindaris in areas of central and south-western Bengal.

Zamindars spearheaded the colonisation of agricultural land, and helped in settling cultivators by providing them with the means of cultivation, including cash loans. The buying and selling of zamindaris accelerated the process of monetisation in the countryside. In addition, zamindars sold the produce from their *milkiyat* lands. There is evidence to show that zamindars often established markets (*haats*) to which peasants also came to sell their produce.

Although there can be little doubt that zamindars were an exploitative class, their relationship with the peasantry had an element of reciprocity, paternalism and patronage. Two aspects reinforce this view. First, the bhakti saints, who eloquently condemned caste-based and other forms of oppression (see also Chapter 6), did not portray the zamindars (or, interestingly, the moneylender) as exploiters or oppressors of the peasantry. Usually it was the

A parallel army!

According to the *Ain,* the combined military strength of the zamindars in Mughal India was 384,558 cavalry, 4,277,057 infantry, 1,863 elephants, 4,260 cannons, and 4,500 boats.

revenue official of the state who was the object of their ire. Second, in a large number of agrarian uprisings which erupted in north India in the seventeenth century, zamindars often received the support of the peasantry in their struggle against the state.

➲ Discuss...

The zamindari system was abolished in India after Independence. Read through this section and identify reasons why this was done.

6. LAND REVENUE SYSTEM

Revenue from the land was the economic mainstay of the Mughal Empire. It was therefore vital for the state to create an administrative apparatus to ensure control over agricultural production, and to fix and collect revenue from across the length and breadth of the rapidly expanding empire. This apparatus included the office (*daftar*) of the *diwan* who was responsible for supervising the fiscal system of the empire. Thus revenue officials and record keepers penetrated the agricultural domain and became a decisive agent in shaping agrarian relations.

The Mughal state tried to first acquire specific information about the extent of the agricultural lands in the empire and what these lands produced before fixing the burden of taxes on people. The land revenue arrangements consisted of two stages – first, assessment and then actual collection. The *jama* was the amount assessed, as opposed to *hasil*, the amount collected. In his list of duties of the *amil-guzar* or revenue collector, Akbar decreed that while he should strive to make cultivators pay in cash, the option of payment in kind was also to be kept open. While fixing revenue, the attempt of the state was to maximise its claims. The scope of actually realising these claims was, however, sometimes thwarted by local conditions.

Both cultivated and cultivable lands were measured in each province. The *Ain* compiled the aggregates of such lands during Akbar's rule. Efforts to measure lands continued under subsequent emperors. For instance, in 1665, Aurangzeb expressly instructed his revenue officials to prepare annual records of the number of cultivators in each village (Source 7). Yet not all areas were measured successfully. As we have seen, forests covered huge areas of the subcontinent and thus remained unmeasured.

Amin was an official responsible for ensuring that imperial regulations were carried out in the provinces.

Source 5

Classification of lands under Akbar

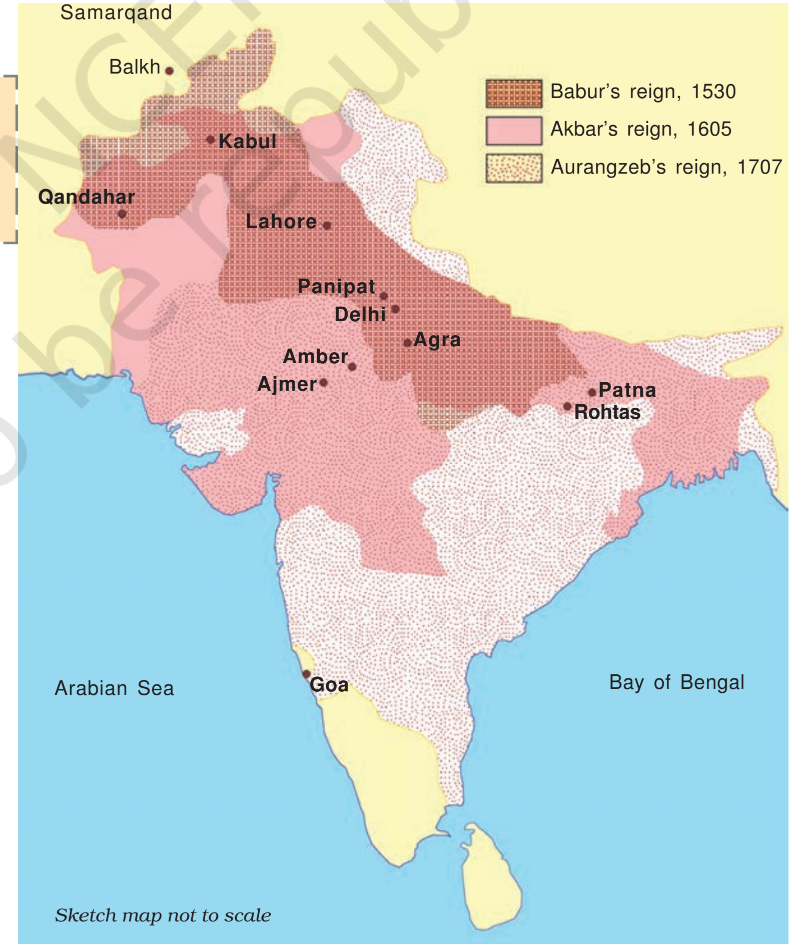
The following is a listing of criteria of classification excerpted from the *Ain:*

> The Emperor Akbar in his profound sagacity classified the lands and fixed a different revenue to be paid by each. *Polaj* is land which is annually cultivated for each crop in succession and is never allowed to lie fallow. *Parauti* is land left out of cultivation for a time that it may recover its strength. *Chachar* is land that has lain fallow for three or four years. *Banjar* is land uncultivated for five years and more. Of the first two kinds of land, there are three classes, good, middling, and bad. They add together the produce of each sort, and the third of this represents the medium produce, one-third part of which is exacted as the Royal dues.

➲ What principles did the Mughal state follow while classifying lands in its territories? How was revenue assessed?

Map 1
The expansion of the Mughal Empire

➲ What impact do you think the expansion of the empire would have had on land revenue collection?


Samarqand
Balkh
Kabul
Qandahar
Lahore
Panipat
Delhi
Agra
Amber
Ajmer
Patna
Rohtas
Goa
Arabian Sea
Bay of Bengal
▨ Babur's reign, 1530
🟥 Akbar's reign, 1605
▨ Aurangzeb's reign, 1707
Sketch map not to scale

The *mansabdari* system

The Mughal administrative system had at its apex a military-cum-bureaucratic apparatus (*mansabdari*) which was responsible for looking after the civil and military affairs of the state. Some *mansabdars* were paid in cash (*naqdi*), while the majority of them were paid through assignments of revenue (*jagirs*) in different regions of the empire. They were transferred periodically. See also Chapter 9.

Source 6

Cash or kind?

The *Ain* on land revenue collection:

> Let him (the *amil-guzar*) not make it a practice of taking only in cash but also in kind. The latter is effected in several ways. First, *kankut*: in the Hindi language *kan* signifies grain, and *kut*, estimates … If any doubts arise, the crops should be cut and estimated in three lots, the good, the middling, and the inferior, and the hesitation removed. Often, too, the land taken by appraisement, gives a sufficiently accurate return. Secondly, *batai,* also called *bhaoli,* the crops are reaped and stacked and divided by agreement in the presence of the parties. But in this case several intelligent inspectors are required; otherwise, the evil-minded and false are given to deception. Thirdly, *khet-batai*, when they divide the fields after they are sown. Fourthly, *lang batai*, after cutting the grain, they form it in heaps and divide it among themselves, and each takes his share home and turns it to profit.

➲ What difference would each of the systems of assessment and collection of revenue have made to the cultivator?

Source 7

The *jama*

This is an excerpt from Aurangzeb's order to his revenue official, 1665:

> He should direct the *amins* of the *parganas* that they should discover the actual conditions of cultivation (*maujudat*), village by village, peasant-wise (*asamiwar*), and after minute scrutiny, assess the *jama*, keeping in view the financial interests (*kifayat*) of the government, and the welfare of the peasantry.

➲ Why do you think the emperor insisted on a detailed survey?

➲ Discuss...

Would you consider the land revenue system of the Mughals as a flexible one?

7. THE FLOW OF SILVER

The Mughal Empire was among the large territorial empires in Asia that had managed to consolidate power and resources during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These empires were the Ming (China), Safavid (Iran) and Ottoman (Turkey). The political stability achieved by all these empires helped create vibrant networks of overland trade from China to the Mediterranean Sea. Voyages of discovery and the opening up of the New World resulted in a massive expansion of Asia's (particularly India's) trade with Europe. This resulted in a greater geographical diversity of India's overseas trade as well as an

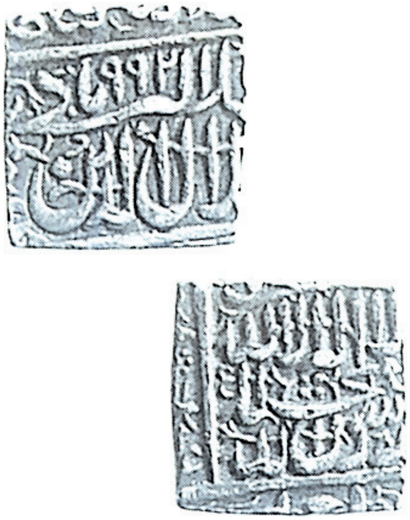


Fig. 8.11
A silver rupya issued by Akbar (obverse and reverse)

expansion in the commodity composition of this trade. An expanding trade brought in huge amounts of silver bullion into Asia to pay for goods procured from India, and a large part of that bullion gravitated towards India. This was good for India as it did not have natural resources of silver. As a result, the period between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries was also marked by a remarkable stability in the availability of metal currency, particularly the silver *rupya* in India. This facilitated an unprecedented expansion of minting of coins and the circulation of money in the economy as well as the ability of the Mughal state to extract taxes and revenue in cash.

The testimony of an Italian traveller, Giovanni Careri, who passed through India *c.* 1690, provides a graphic account about the way silver travelled across the globe to reach India. It also gives us an idea of the phenomenal amounts of cash and commodity transactions in seventeenth-century India.

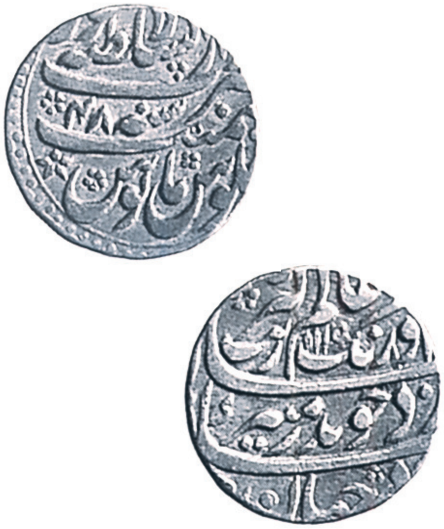


Fig. 8.12
A silver rupya *issued by Aurangzeb*

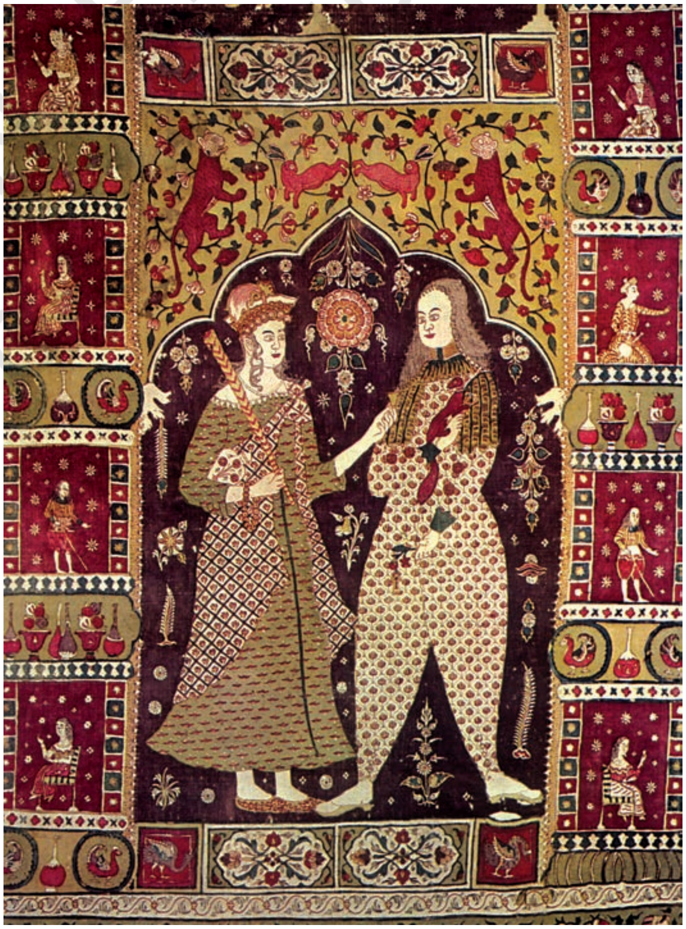


Fig. 8.13
An example of textiles produced in the subcontinent to meet the demands of European markets

➲ Discuss...

Find out whether there are any taxes on agricultural production at present in your state. Explain the similarities and differences between Mughal fiscal policies and those adopted by present-day state governments.

Source 8

How silver came to India

This excerpt from Giovanni Careri's account (based on Bernier's account) gives an idea of the enormous amount of wealth that found its way into the Mughal Empire:

> That the Reader may form some idea of the Wealth of this (Mughal) Empire, he is to observe that all the Gold and Silver, which circulates throughout the World at last Centres here. It is well known that as much of it comes out of America, after running through several Kingdoms of Europe, goes partly into Turky (Turkey), for several sorts of Commodities; and part into Persia, by the way of Smirna for Silk. Now the Turks not being able to abstain from Coffee, which comes from Hyeman (Oman), and Arabia … nor Persia, Arabia, and the Turks themselves to go without the commodities of India, send vast quantities of Mony (money) to Moka (Mocha) on the Red Sea, near Babel Mandel; to Bassora (Basra) at the bottom of the Persian Gulgh (Gulf); … which is afterwards sent over in Ships to Indostan (Hindustan). Besides the Indian, Dutch, English, and Portuguese Ships, that every Year carry the Commodities of Indostan, to Pegu, Tanasserri (parts of Myanmar), Siam (Thailand), Ceylon (Sri Lanka) … the Maldive Islands, Mozambique and other Places, must of necessity convey much Gold and Silver thither, from those Countries. All that the Dutch fetch from the Mines in Japan, sooner or later, goes to Indostan; and the goods carry'd hence into Europe, whether to France, England, or Portugal, are all purchas'd for ready Mony, which remains there.

8. THE *AIN-I AKBARI* OF ABU'L FAZL ALLAMI

The *Ain-i Akbari* was the culmination of a large historical, administrative project of classification undertaken by Abu'l Fazl at the order of Emperor Akbar. It was completed in 1598, the forty-second regnal year of the emperor, after having gone through five revisions. The *Ain* was part of a larger project of history writing commissioned by Akbar. This history, known as the *Akbar Nama*, comprised three books. The first two provided a historical narrative. We will look at these parts more closely in Chapter 9. The *Ain-i Akbari*, the third book, was organised as a compendium of imperial regulations and a gazetteer of the empire.

The *Ain* gives detailed accounts of the organisation of the court, administration and army, the sources of revenue and the physical layout of the provinces of Akbar's empire and the literary, cultural and religious traditions of the people. Along with a description of the various departments of Akbar's government and elaborate descriptions of the

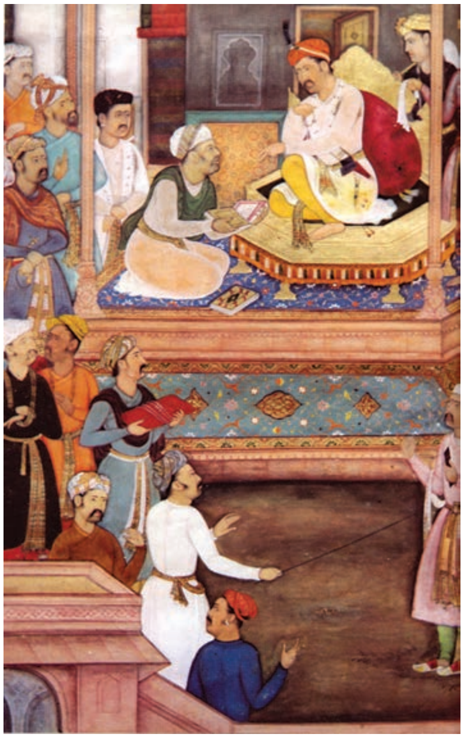


Fig. 8.14
Abu'l Fazl presenting the manuscript of the completed Akbar Nama *to his patron*

various provinces (*subas*) of the empire, the *Ain* gives us intricate quantitative information of those provinces.

Collecting and compiling this information systematically was an important imperial exercise. It informed the emperor about the varied and diverse customs and practices prevailing across his extensive territories. The *Ain* is therefore a mine of information for us about the Mughal Empire during Akbar's reign. It is important, however, to keep in mind that this is a view of the regions from the centre, a view of society from its apex.

The *Ain* is made up of five books (*daftars*), of which the first three books describe the administration. The first book, called *manzil-abadi*, concerns the imperial household and its maintenance. The second book, *sipah-abadi*, covers the military and civil administration and the establishment of servants. This book includes notices and short biographical sketches of imperial officials (*mansabdars*), learned men, poets and artists.

The third book, *mulk-abadi*, is the one which deals with the fiscal side of the empire and provides rich quantitative information on revenue rates, followed by the "Account of the Twelve Provinces". This section has detailed statistical information, which includes the geographic, topographic and economic profile of all *subas and* their administrative and fiscal divisions (*sarkars*, *parganas* and *mahals*), total measured area, and assessed revenue (*jama*).

After setting out details at the *suba* level, the *Ain* goes on to give a detailed picture of the *sarkars* below the *suba*. This it does in the form of tables, which have eight columns giving the following information: (1) *parganat/mahal*; (2) *qila* (forts); (3) *arazi* and *zamin-i paimuda* (measured area); (4) *naqdi*, revenue assessed in cash; (5) *suyurghal*, grants of revenue in charity; (6) zamindars*;* columns 7 and 8 contain details of the castes of these zamindars, and their troops including their horsemen (*sawar*), foot-soldiers (*piyada*) and elephants (*fil*). The *mulk-abadi* gives a fascinating, detailed and highly complex view of agrarian society in northern India. The fourth and fifth books (*daftars*) deal with the religious, literary and cultural traditions of the people of India and also contain a collection of Akbar's "auspicious sayings".

Source 9

"Moistening the rose garden of fortune"

In this extract Abu'l Fazl gives a vivid account of how and from whom he collected his information:

> ... to Abu'l Fazl, son of Mubarak ... this sublime mandate was given. "Write with the pen of sincerity the account of the glorious events and of our dominion-conquering victories ... Assuredly, I spent much labour and research in collecting the records and narratives of His Majesty's actions and I was a long time interrogating the servants of the State and the old members of the illustrious family. I examined both prudent, truth-speaking old men and active-minded, right-actioned young ones and reduced their statements to writing. The Royal commands were issued to the provinces, that those who from old service remembered, with certainty or with adminicle of doubt, the events of the past, should copy out the notes and memoranda and transit them to the court. (Then) a second command shone forth from the holy Presence-chamber; to wit – that the materials which had been collected should be ... recited in the royal hearing, and whatever might have to be written down afterwards, should be introduced into the noble volume as a supplement, and that such details as on account of the minuteness of the inquiries and the *minutae* of affairs, (which) could not then be brought to an end, should be inserted afterwards at my leisure.
>
> Being relieved by this royal order – the interpreter of the Divine ordinance – from the secret anxiety of my heart, I proceeded to reduce into writing the rough draughts (drafts)which were void of the grace of arrangement and style. I obtained the chronicle of events beginning at the Nineteenth Year of the Divine Era, when the Record Office was established by the enlightened intellect of His Majesty, and from its rich pages, I gathered the accounts of many events. Great pains too, were taken to procure the originals or copies of most of the orders which had been issued to the provinces from the Accession up to the present-day ... I also took much trouble to incorporate many of the reports which ministers and high officials had submitted, about the affairs of the empire and the events of foreign countries. And my labour-loving soul was satiated by the apparatus of inquiry and research. I also exerted myself energetically to collect the rough notes and memoranda of sagacious and well-informed men. By these means, I constructed a reservoir for irrigating and moistening the rose garden of fortune (the *Akbar Nama*).

➲ List all the sources that Abu'l Fazl used to compile his work. Which of these sources would have been most useful for arriving at an understanding of agrarian relations? To what extent do you think his work would have been influenced by his relationship with Akbar?

Translating the *Ain*

Given the importance of the *Ain*, it has been translated for use by a number of scholars. Henry Blochmann edited it and the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta (present-day Kolkata), published it in its Bibliotheca Indica series. The book has also been translated into English in three volumes. The standard translation of Volume 1 is that of Henry Blochmann (Calcutta 1873). The other two volumes were translated by H.S. Jarrett (Calcutta 1891 and 1894).

Although the *Ain was* officially sponsored to record detailed information to facilitate Emperor Akbar govern his empire, it was much more than a reproduction of official papers. That the manuscript was revised five times by the author would suggest a high degree of caution on the part of Abu'l Fazl and a search for authenticity. For instance, oral testimonies were cross-checked and verified before being incorporated as "facts" in the chronicle. In the quantitative sections, all numeric data were reproduced in words so as to minimise the chances of subsequent transcriptional errors.

Historians who have carefully studied the *Ain* point out that it is not without its problems. Numerous errors in totalling have been detected. These are ascribed to simple slips of arithmetic or of transcription by Abu'l Fazl's assistants. These are generally minor and do not detract from the overall quantitative veracity of the manuals.

Another limitation of the *Ain* is the somewhat skewed nature of the quantitative data. Data were not collected uniformly from all provinces. For instance, while for many *subas* detailed information was compiled about the caste composition of the zamindars, such information is not available for Bengal and Orissa. Further, while the fiscal data from the *subas* is remarkable for its richness, some equally vital parameters such as prices and wages from these same areas are not as well documented. The detailed list of prices and wages that the *Ain* does provide is mainly derived from data pertaining to areas in or around the imperial capital of Agra, and is therefore of limited relevance for the rest of the country.

These limitations notwithstanding, the *Ain* remains an extraordinary document of its times. By providing fascinating glimpses into the structure and organisation of the Mughal Empire and by giving us quantitative information about its products and people, Abu'l Fazl achieved a major breakthrough in the tradition of medieval chroniclers who wrote mostly about remarkable political events – wars, conquests, political machinations, and dynastic turmoil. Information about the country, its people and its products was mentioned only incidentally and as embellishments to the essentially political thrust of the narrative.

The *Ain* completely departed from this tradition as it recorded information about the *empire* and the *people* of India, and thus constitutes a benchmark for studying India at the turn of the seventeenth century. The value of the *Ain*'s quantitative evidence is uncontested where the study of agrarian relations is concerned. But it is the information it contains on people, their professions and trades and on the imperial establishment and the grandees of the empire which enables historians to reconstruct the social fabric of India at that time.

TIMELINE
LANDMARKS IN THE HISTORY OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

1526	Babur defeats Ibrahim Lodi, the Delhi Sultan, at Panipat, becomes the first Mughal emperor
1530-40	First phase of Humayun's reign
1540-55	Humayun defeated by Sher Shah, in exile at the Safavid court
1555-56	Humayun regains lost territories
1556-1605	Reign of Akbar
1605-27	Reign of Jahangir
1628-58	Reign of Shah Jahan
1658-1707	Reign of Aurangzeb
1739	Nadir Shah invades India and sacks Delhi
1761	Ahmad Shah Abdali defeats the Marathas in the third battle of Panipat
1765	The *diwani* of Bengal transferred to the East India Company
1857	Last Mughal ruler, Bahadur Shah II, deposed by the British and exiled to Rangoon (present day Yangon, Myanmar)

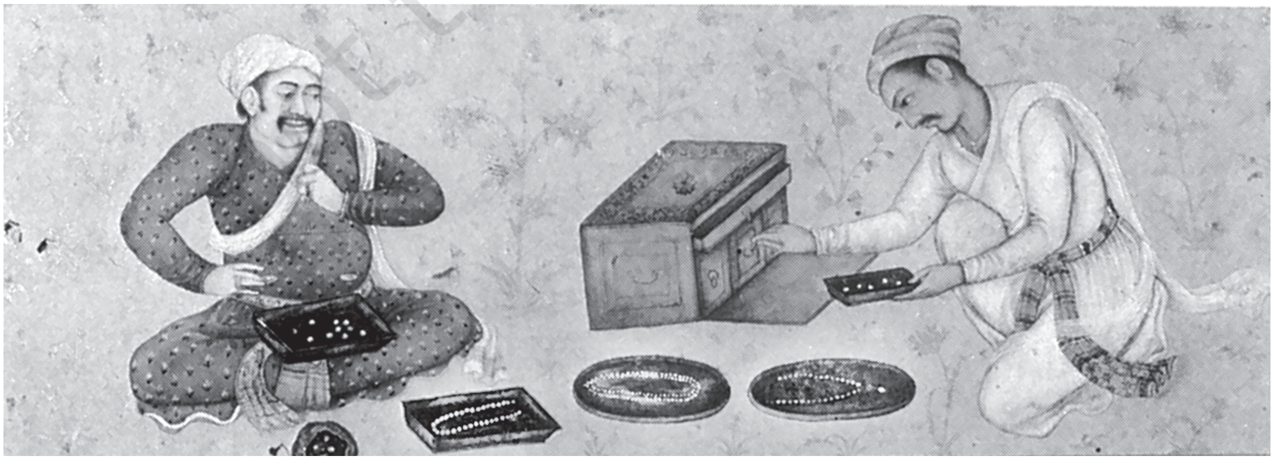
ANSWER IN 100-150 WORDS

1. What are the problems in using the *Ain* as a source for reconstructing agrarian history? How do historians deal with this situation?
2. To what extent is it possible to characterise agricultural production in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries as subsistence agriculture? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Describe the role played by women in agricultural production.
4. Discuss, with examples, the significance of monetary transactions during the period under consideration.
5. Examine the evidence that suggests that land revenue was important for the Mughal fiscal system.

WRITE A SHORT ESSAY (ABOUT 250-300 WORDS) ON THE FOLLOWING:

6. To what extent do you think caste was a factor in influencing social and economic relations in agrarian society?
7. How were the lives of forest dwellers transformed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?
8. Examine the role played by zamindars in Mughal India.
9. Discuss the ways in which panchayats and village headmen regulated rural society.

Fig. 8.15
A seventeenth-century painting depicting jewellers



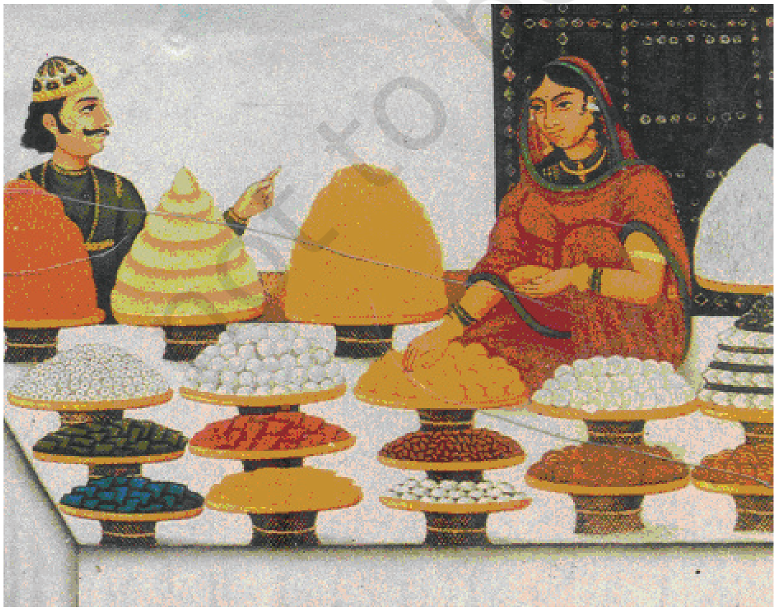
MAP WORK

10. On an outline map of the world, mark the areas which had economic links with the Mughal Empire, and trace out possible routes of communication.

PROJECT (CHOOSE ONE)

11. Visit a neighbouring village. Find out how many people live there, which crops are grown, which animals are raised, which artisanal groups reside there, whether women own land, how the local panchayat functions. Compare this information with what you have learnt about the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, noting similarities and differences. Explain both the changes and the continuities that you find.
12. Select a small section of the *Ain* (10-12 pages, available online at the website indicated below). Read it carefully and prepare a report on how it can be used by a historian.

Fig. 8.16
A painting depicting a woman selling sweets



If you would like to know more, read:

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Routledge, London.

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Money and the Market in India, 1100-1700.
Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

For more information, you could visit:
http://persian.packhum.org persianindex.jsp?serv=pf&file=00702053&ct=0

Credits for Illustrations

Theme 5
Fig. 5.1: Ritu Topa.
Fig. 5.2: Henri Stierlin, *The Cultural History of the Arabs,* Aurum Press, London, 1981.
Fig. 5.4, 5.13: FICCI, *Footprints of Enterprise: Indian Business Through the Ages,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999.
Fig. 5.5: Calcutta Art Gallery, printed in E.B. Havell, *The Art Heritage of India,* D.B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., Bombay, 1964.
Fig. 5.6, 5.7, 5.12: Bamber Gascoigne, *The Great Moghuls*, Jonathan Cape Ltd., London, 1971.
Fig. 5.8, 5.9: Sunil Kumar.
Fig. 5.10: Rosemary Crill, *Indian Ikat Textiles,* Weatherhill, London, 1998.
Fig. 5.11, 5.14: C.A. Bayly (ed). *An Illustrated History of Modern India, 1600-1947,* Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1991.

Theme 6
Fig. 6.1: Susan L. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India,* Weatherhill, New York, 1993.
Fig. 6.3, 6.17: Jim Masselos, Jackie Menzies and Pratapaditya Pal, *Dancing to the Flute: Music and Dance in Indian Art,* The Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, 1997.
Fig. 6.4, 6.5: Benjamin Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India,* Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1970.
Fig. 6.6: Henri Stierlin, *The Cultural History of the Arabs,* Aurum Press, London, 1981.
Fig. 6.8: http://www.us.iis.ac.uk/view_article.asp/ContentID=104228
Fig. 6.9: http://www.thekkepuram.ourfamily.com/miskal.htm
Fig. 6.10: http://a-bangladesh.com/banglapedia/Images/A_0350A.JPG
Fig. 6.11: foziaqazi@kashmirvision.com
Fig. 6.12: Stuart Cary Welch, *Indian Art and Culture 1300-1900,* The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1985.
Fig. 6.13: Bamber Gascoigne, *The Great Moghuls,* Jonathan Cape Ltd., London, 1971.
Fig. 6.15: CCRT.
Fig. 6.16: C. A. Bayly (ed). *An Illustrated History of Modern India, 1600-1947,* Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1991.
Fig. 6.18: Ahmad Nabi Khan, *Islamic Architecture in Pakistan,* National Hijra Council, Islamabad, 1990.

Theme 7
Fig. 7.1, 7.11, 7.12, 7.14, 7.15, 7.16, 7.18: Vasundhara Filliozat and George Michell (eds), *The Splendours of Vijayanagara,* Marg Publications, Bombay, 1981.
Fig. 7.2: C.A. Bayly (ed). *An Illustrated History of Modern India, 1600-1947,* Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1991.

Fig. 7.3: Susan L. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India,* Weatherhill, New York, 1993.
Fig. 7.4, 7.6, 7.7, 7.20, 7. 23, 7.26, 7.27, 7.32: George Michell, *Architecture and Art of South India,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995.
Fig. 7.5, 7.8, 7.9, 7.21 http://www.museum.upenn.edu/new/research/Exp_Rese_Disc/Asia/vrp/HTML/Vijay_Hist.shtml
Fig 7.10: Catherine B. Asher and Cynthia Talbot. *India Before Europe,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006.
Fig. 7.17, 7.22, 7.24, 7.28, 7.29, 7.30, 7.31, 7.33: George Michell and M.B.Wagoner, *Vijayanagara: Architectural Inventory of the Sacred Centre,* Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi.
Fig. 7.25: CCRT.

Theme 8

Fig. 8.1, 8.9: Milo Cleveland Beach and Ebba Koch, *King of the World,* Sackler Gallery, New York, 1997.
Fig. 8.3: India Office Library, printed in C.A. Bailey (ed). *An Illustrated History of Modern India, 1600-1947,* Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1991.
Fig. 8.4: Harvard University Art Museum, printed in Stuart Cary Welch, *Indian Art and Culture 1300-1900,* The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1985.
Fig. 8.6, 8.11, 8.12, 8.14: C.A. Bayly (ed). *An Illustrated History of Modern India, 1600-1947,* Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1991.
Fig. 8.13, 8.15: Bamber Gascoigne, *The Great Moghuls*, Jonathan Cape Ltd., London, 1971.

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